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A RAW YOUTH

THE NOVELS OF FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Translated from the Russian by CONSTANCE
GARNETT, Crown 8vo,

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV
THE IDIOT
THE POSSESSED
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD
THE INSULTED AND INJURED
A RAW YOUTH
THE ETERNAL HUSBAND
THE GAMBLER AND OTHER STORIES
WHITE NIGHTS
AN HONEST THIEF
THE FRIEND OF THE FAMILY

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

A
RAW
YOUTH

*Translated from
the Russian by*

CONSTANCE GARNETT



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PART I

CHAPTER I

1

I CANNOT resist sitting down to write the history of the first steps in my career, though I might very well abstain from doing so. . . . I know one thing for certain: I shall never again sit down to write my autobiography even if I live to be a hundred. One must be too disgustingly in love with self to be able without shame to write about oneself. I can only excuse myself on the ground that I am not writing with the same object with which other people write, that is, to win the praise of my readers. It has suddenly occurred to me to write out word for word all that has happened to me during this last year, simply from an inward impulse, because I am so impressed by all that has happened. I shall simply record the incidents, doing my utmost to exclude everything extraneous, especially all literary graces. The professional writer writes for thirty years, and is quite unable to say at the end why he has been writing for all that time. I am not a professional writer and don't want to be, and to drag forth into the literary market-place the inmost secrets of my soul and an artistic description of my feelings I should regard as indecent and contemptible. I foresee, however, with vexation, that it will be impossible to avoid describing feelings altogether and making reflections (even, perhaps, cheap ones), so corrupting is every sort of literary pursuit in its effect, even if it be undertaken only for one's own satisfaction. The reflections may indeed be very cheap, because what is of value for oneself may very well have no value for others. But all this is beside the mark. It will do for a preface, however. There will be nothing more of the sort. Let us get to work, though there is nothing more difficult than to begin upon some sorts of work—perhaps any sort of work.

I am beginning—or rather, I should like to begin—these notes from the 19th of September of last year, that is, from the very day I first met . . .

But to explain so prematurely who it was I met before anything else is known would be cheap ; in fact, I believe my tone is cheap. I vowed I would eschew all literary graces, and here at the first sentence I am being seduced by them. It seems as if writing sensibly can't be done simply by wanting to. I may remark, also, that I fancy writing is more difficult in Russian than in any other European language. I am now reading over what I have just written, and I see that I am much cleverer than what I have written. How is it that what is expressed by a clever man is much more stupid than what is left in him ? I have more than once during this momentous year noticed this with myself in my relations with people, and have been very much worried by it.

Although I am beginning from the 19th of September, I must put in a word or two about who I am and where I had been till then, and what was consequently my state of mind on the morning of that day, to make things clearer to the reader, and perhaps to myself also.

I have passed the leaving examination at the grammar school, and now I am in my twenty-first year. My surname is Dolgoruky, and my legal father is Makar Ivanov Dolgoruky, formerly a serf in the household of the Versilovs. In this way I am a legitimate son, although I am, as a matter of fact, conspicuously illegitimate, and there is not the faintest doubt about my origin.

The facts are as follows. Twenty-two years ago Versilov (that is my father), being twenty-five years old, visited his estate in the province of Tula. I imagine that at that time his character was still quite unformed. It is curious that this man who, even in my childhood, made such an impression upon me, who had such a crucial influence on the whole bent of my mind, and who perhaps has even cast his shadow over the whole of my future, still remains, even now, a complete enigma to me in many respects. Of this, more particulars later. There is

no describing him straight off. My whole manuscript will be full of this man, anyway.

He had just been left a widower at that time, that is, when he was twenty-five. He had married one of the Fanariotovs—a girl of high rank but without much money—and by her he had a son and a daughter. The facts that I have gathered about this wife whom he lost so early are somewhat scanty, and are lost among my materials, and, indeed, many of the circumstances of Versilov's private life have eluded me, for he has always been so proud, disdainful, reserved and casual with me, in spite of a sort of meekness towards me which was striking at times. I will mention, however, to make things clear beforehand, that he ran through three fortunes in his lifetime, and very big ones too, of over fourteen hundred souls, and maybe more. Now, of course, he has not a farthing.

He went to the village on that occasion, "God knows why," so at least he said to me afterwards. His young children were, as usual, not with him but with relations. This was always his method with his children, legitimate and illegitimate alike. The house-serfs on this estate were rather numerous, and among them was a gardener called Makar Ivanov Dolgoruky. Here I will note in parenthesis, to relieve my mind once and for all, I doubt whether anyone can ever have raged against his surname as I have all my life; this is stupid, of course, but so it has been. Every time I entered a school or met persons whom I had to treat with respect as my elders, every wretched little teacher, tutor, priest—anyone you like—on asking my name and hearing it was Dolgoruky, for some reason invariably thought fitting to add, "Prince Dolgoruky?" And every single time I was forced to explain to these futile people, "No, *simply* Dolgoruky."

That *simply* began to drive me mad at last. Here I note as a curious phenomenon that I don't remember a single exception; every one asked the question. For some it was apparently quite superfluous, and indeed I don't know how the devil it could have been necessary for anyone. But all, every one of them asked it. On hearing that I was *simply* Dolgoruky, the questioner usually looked me up and down with a blank and stupidly apathetic stare that betrayed that he did not know why he had asked the question. Then he would walk away. My comrades and schoolfellows were the most insulting of all. How do schoolboys question a new-comer? The new boy,

abashed and confused on the first day of entering a school (whatever school it may be), is the victim of all ; they order him about, they tease him, and treat him like a lackey. A stout, chubby urchin suddenly stands still before his victim and watches him persistently for some moments with a stern and haughty stare. The new boy stands facing him in silence, looks at him out of the corner of his eyes, and, if he is not a coward, waits to see what is going to happen.

“ What’s your name ? ”

“ Dolgoruky.”

“ Prince Dolgoruky ? ”

“ No, simply Dolgoruky.”

“ Ah, simply ! Fool.”

And he was right ; nothing could be more foolish than to be called Dolgoruky without being a prince. I have to bear the burden of that foolishness through no fault of my own. Later on, when I began to get very cross about it, I always answered the question “ Are you a prince ? ” by saying, “ No, I’m the son of a servant, formerly a serf.”

At last, when I was roused to the utmost pitch of fury, I resolutely answered :

“ No, simply Dolgoruky, the illegitimate son of my former owner.”

I thought of this when I was in the sixth form of the grammar school, and though I was very soon after thoroughly convinced that I was stupid, I did not at once give up being so. I remember that one of the teachers opined—he was alone in his opinion, however—that I was “ filled with ideas of vengeance and civic rights.” As a rule this reply was received with a sort of meditative pensiveness, anything but flattering to me.

At last one of my schoolfellows, a very sarcastic boy, to whom I hardly talked once in a year, said to me with a serious countenance, looking a little away :

“ Such sentiments do you credit, of course, and no doubt you have something to be proud of ; but if I were in your place I should not be too festive over being illegitimate . . . you seem to expect congratulations ! ”

From that time forth I dropped boasting of being illegitimate.

I repeat, it is very difficult to write in Russian : here I have covered three pages with describing how furious I have been all my life with my surname, and after all the reader will, no doubt, probably have deduced that I was really furious at not being a

prince but simply Dolgoruky. To explain again and defend myself would be humiliating.

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And so among the servants, of whom there were a great number besides Makar Ivanitch, there was a maid, and she was eighteen when Makar Dolgoruky, who was fifty, suddenly announced his intention of marrying her. In the days of serfdom marriages of house-serfs, as every one knows, only took place with the sanction of their masters, and were sometimes simply arranged by the latter. At that time "auntie" was living on the estate; not that she was my aunt, though: she had, in fact, an estate of her own; but, I don't know why, every one knew her all her life as "auntie"—not mine in particular but an aunt in general, even in the family of Versilov, to whom she can hardly have been related. Her name was Tatyana Pavlovna Prutkov. In those days she still had, in the same province and district, a property of thirty-five serfs of her own. She didn't exactly administer Versilov's estate (of five hundred serfs), but, being so near a neighbour, she kept a vigilant eye on it, and her superintendence, so I have heard, was as efficient as that of any trained steward. However, her efficiency is nothing to do with me. But, to dispose of all suspicion of cringing or flattery on my part, I should like to add that this Tatyana Pavlovna was a generous and even original person.

Well, far from checking the gloomy Makar Dolgoruky's matrimonial inclinations (I am told he was gloomy in those days), she gave them the warmest encouragement.

Sofia Andreyevna, the serf-girl of eighteen (that is, my mother), had been for some years fatherless and motherless. Her father, also a serf, who had a great respect for Makar Dolgoruky and was under some obligation to him, had six years before, on his death-bed, beckoned to the old gardener and, pointing significantly to his daughter, had, in the presence of the priest and all the servants, bequeathed her to him, saying, "When she's grown up, marry her." This was, so they say, a quarter of an hour before he expired, so that it might, if need be, have been put down to delirium; besides which, he had no right to dispense of property, being a serf. Every one heard his words. As for Makar Ivanovitch, I don't know in what spirit he afterwards entered upon the marriage, whether with great eagerness or simply as

the fulfilment of a duty. Probably he preserved an appearance of complete indifference. He was a man who even at that time knew how to "keep up his dignity." It was not that he was a particularly well-educated or reading man (though he knew the whole of the church service and some lives of the saints, but this was only from hearing them). It was not that he was a sort of backstairs philosopher; it was simply that he was a man of obstinate, and even at times rash character, was conceited in his talk, autocratic in his judgment, and "respectful in his life," to use his own surprising expression; that is what he was like at that time. Of course, he was universally respected, but, I am told, disliked by every one. It was a different matter when he ceased to be a house-serf; then he was spoken about as a saint and a man who had suffered much. That I know for a fact.

As for my mother, Tatyana Pavlovna had kept her till the age of eighteen in her house, although the steward had urged that the girl should be sent to Moscow to be trained. She had given the orphan some education, that is, taught her sewing and cutting out clothes, ladylike deportment, and even a little reading. My mother was never able to write decently. She looked upon this marriage with Makar Ivanovitch as something settled long ago, and everything that happened to her in those days she considered very good and all for the best. She went to her wedding looking as unmoved as anyone could on such an occasion, so much so that even Tatyana Pavlovna called her a fish. All this about my mother's character at that time I heard from Tatyana Pavlovna herself. Versilov arrived just six months after this wedding.

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I only want to say that I have never been able to find out or to guess to my own satisfaction what led up to everything between him and my mother. I am quite ready to believe, as he himself assured me last year with a flushed face, though he talked of all this with the most unconstrained and flippant air, that there was no romance about it at all, that it had just happened. I believe that it did just happen, and that little phrase *just happened* is delightful, yet I always wanted to know how it could have come about. I have always hated that sort of nastiness all my life and always shall. It's not simply a disgraceful curiosity on my part, of course. I may remark that I knew

absolutely nothing of my mother till a year ago. For the sake of Versilov's comfort I was sent away to strangers, but of that later, and so I can never picture what she looked like at that time. If she had not been at all pretty, what could a man such as Versilov was then have found attractive in her? This question is of importance to me because it throws a light on an extremely interesting side of that man's character. It is for that reason I ask it and not from depravity. Gloomy and reserved as he always was, he told me himself on one occasion, with that charming candour which he used to produce (from the devil knows where—it seemed to come out of his pocket when he saw it was indispensable) that at that time he was a "very silly young puppy"; not that he was exactly sentimental, but just that he had lately read "Poor Anton" and "Polinka Sachs," two literary works which exerted an immense, humanizing influence on the younger generation of that day. He added that it was perhaps through "Poor Anton" that he went to the country, and he added it with the utmost gravity. How did that "silly puppy" begin at first with my mother? I have suddenly realized that if I had a single reader he would certainly be laughing at me as a most ridiculous raw youth, still stupidly innocent, putting himself forward to discuss and criticize what he knows nothing about. It is true that I know nothing about it, though I recognize that not at all with pride, for I know how stupid such inexperience is in a great dolt of twenty; only I would tell such a gentleman that he knows nothing about it himself, and I will prove it to him. It is true that I know nothing about women, and I don't want to either, for I shall always despise that sort of thing, and I have sworn I will all my life.

But I know for certain, though, that some women fascinate by their beauty, or by anything you like, all in a minute, while you may ruminant over another for six months before you understand what is in her; and that to see through and love such a woman it is not enough to look at her, it is not enough to be simply ready for anything, one must have a special gift besides. Of that I am convinced, although I do know nothing about it: and if it were not true it would mean degrading all women to the level of domestic animals, and only keeping them about one as such; possibly this is what very many people would like.

I know from several sources that my mother was by no means a beauty, though I have never seen the portrait of her at that

age which is in existence. So it was impossible to have fallen in love with her at first sight. Simply to "amuse himself" Ver-silov might have pitched on some one else, and there was some one else in the house, an unmarried girl too, Anfisa Konstantinovna Sapozhkov, a housemaid. To a man who had brought "Poor Anton" with him to the country it must have seemed shameful to take advantage of his seigniorial rights to violate the sanctity of a marriage, even that of his serf, for I repeat, he spoke with extreme seriousness of this "Poor Anton" only a few months ago, that is, twenty years after the event. Why, "Poor Anton" only had his horse taken from him, but this was a wife! So there must have been something peculiar in this case, and Mlle. Sapozhkov was the loser by it (or rather, I should say, the gainer). I attacked him with all these questions once or twice last year when it was possible to talk to him (for it wasn't always possible to talk to him). And, in spite of all his society polish and the lapse of twenty years, I noticed that he winced. But I persisted. On one occasion, anyway, although he maintained the air of worldly superciliousness which he invariably thought fit to assume with me, he muttered strangely that my mother was one of those "defenceless" people whom one does not fall in love with—quite the contrary, in fact—but whom one suddenly pities for their gentleness, perhaps, though one cannot tell what for. That no one ever knows, but one goes on pitying them, one pities them and grows fond of them. "In fact, my dear boy, there are cases when one can't shake it off." That was what he told me. And if that was how it really happened I could not look upon him as the "silly puppy" he had proclaimed himself. That is just what I wanted.

He went on to assure me, however, that my mother loved him "through servility." He positively pretended it was because he was her master! He lied, thinking this was chic! He lied against his conscience, against all honour and generosity.

I have said all this, of course, as it were to the credit of my mother. But I have explained already that I knew nothing whatever of her as she was then. What is more, I know the rigidity of her environment, and the pitiful ideas in which she had become set from her childhood and to which she remained enslaved for the rest of her life. The misfortune happened, nevertheless. I must correct myself, by the way. Letting my fancy run away with me, I have forgotten the fact which I ought to have stated first of all, that is, that the misfortune

happened at the very outset (I hope that the reader will not be too squeamish to understand at once what I mean). In fact, it began with his exercising his seignorial rights, although Mlle. Sapozhkov was passed over. But here, in self-defence, I must declare at once that I am not contradicting myself. For—good Lord!—what could a man like Versilov have talked about at that date with a person like my mother even if he had felt the most overwhelming love for her? I have heard from depraved people that men and women very often come together without a word being uttered, which is, of course, the last extreme of monstrous loathsomeness. Nevertheless, I do not see how Versilov could have begun differently with my mother if he had wanted to. Could he have begun by expounding “Polinka Sachs” to her? And besides, they had no thoughts to spare for Russian literature; on the contrary, from what he said (he let himself go once), they used to hide in corners, wait for each other on the stairs, fly apart like bouncing balls, with flushed cheeks if anyone passed by, and the “tyrant slave-owner” trembled before the lowest scrubbing-maid, in spite of his seignorial rights. And although it was at first an affair of master and servant, it was that and yet not that, and after all, there is no really explaining it. In fact, the more you go into it the more obscure it seems. The very depth and duration of their love makes it more mysterious, for it is a leading characteristic of such men as Versilov to abandon as soon as their object is attained. That did not happen, though. To transgress with an attractive, giddy flirt who was his serf (and my mother was not a flirt) was not only possible but inevitable for a depraved young puppy (and they were all depraved, every one of them, the progressives as well as the reactionaries), especially considering his romantic position as a young widower and his having nothing to do. But to love her all his life is too much. I cannot guarantee that he did love her, but he has dragged her about with him all his life—that’s certain.

I put a great many questions to my mother, but there is one, most important, which, I may remark, I did not venture to ask her directly, though I got on such familiar terms with her last year; and, what is more, like a coarse, ungrateful puppy, considering she had wronged me, I did not spare her feelings at all. This was the question: how she after six months of marriage, crushed by her ideas of the sanctity of wedlock, crushed like some helpless fly, respecting her Makar Ivanovitch

as though he had been a god—how she could have brought herself in about a fortnight to such a sin? Was my mother a depraved woman, perhaps? On the contrary, I may say now at once that it is difficult to imagine anyone more pure-hearted than she was then and has been all her life. The explanation may be, perhaps, that she scarcely knew what she was doing (I don't mean in the sense in which lawyers nowadays urge this in defence of their thieves and murderers), but was carried away by a violent emotion, which sometimes gains a fatal and tragic ascendancy when the victim is of a certain degree of simplicity. There is no telling: perhaps she fell madly in love with . . . the cut of his clothes, the Parisian style in which he parted his hair, his French accent—yes, French, though she didn't understand a word of it—the song he sang at the piano; she fell in love with something she had never seen or heard of (and he was very handsome), and fell in love with him straight away, once for all, hopelessly, fell in love with him altogether—manners, song, and all. I have heard that this did sometimes happen to peasant girls in the days of serfdom, and to the most virtuous, too. I understand this, and the man is a scoundrel who puts it down to nothing but servility. And so perhaps this young man may have had enough direct power of fascination to attract a creature who had till then been so pure and who was of a different species, of an utterly different world, and to lead her on to such evident ruin. That it was to her ruin my mother, I hope, realized all her life; only probably when she went to it she did not think of ruin at all; but that is how it always is with these "defenceless" creatures, they know it is ruin and they rush upon it.

Having sinned, they promptly repented. He told me flipantly that he sobbed on the shoulder of Makar Ivanovitch, whom he sent for to his study expressly for the purpose, and she—she meanwhile was lying unconscious in some little back room in the servants' quarters. . . .

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But enough of questions and scandalous details. After paying Makar Ivanovitch a sum of money for my mother, Versilov went away shortly afterwards, and ever since, as I have mentioned already, he dragged her about with him, almost everywhere he went, except at certain times when he absented himself

for a considerable period. Then, as a rule, he left her in the care of "auntie," that is, of Tatyana Pavlovna Prutkov, who always turned up on such occasions. They lived in Moscow, and also in other towns and villages, even abroad, and finally in Petersburg. Of all that later, though perhaps it is not worth recording. I will only mention that a year after my mother left Makar Ivanovitch, I made my appearance, and a year later my sister, and ten or eleven years afterwards a sickly child, my younger brother, who died a few months later. My mother's terrible confinement with this baby was the end of her good looks, so at least I was told : she began rapidly to grow older and feebler.

But a correspondence with Makar Ivanovitch was always kept up. Wherever the Versilovs were, whether they lived for some years in the same place, or were moving about, Makar Ivanovitch never failed to send news of himself to the "family." Strange relations grew up, somewhat ceremonious and almost solemn. Among the gentry there is always an element of something comic in such relations, I know. But there was nothing of the sort in this case. Letters were exchanged twice a year, never more nor less frequently, and they were extraordinarily alike. I have seen them. There was scarcely anything personal in them. On the contrary, they were practically nothing but ceremonious statements of the most public incidents, and the most public sentiments, if one may use such an expression of sentiments ; first came news of his own health, and inquiries about their health, then ceremonious hopes, greetings and blessings—that was all.

I believe that this publicity and impersonality is looked upon as the essence of propriety and good breeding among the peasants. "To our much esteemed and respected spouse, Sofia Andreyevna, we send our humblest greetings. . . ." "We send to our beloved children, our fatherly blessing, ever unalterable." The children were mentioned by name, including me. I may remark here that Makar Ivanovitch had so much wit as never to describe "His high-born most respected master, Andrey Petrovitch" as his "benefactor" ; though he did invariably, in each letter, send him his most humble greetings, beg for the continuance of his favour, and call down upon him the blessing of God. The answers to Makar Ivanovitch were sent shortly after by my mother, and were always written in exactly the same style. Versilov, of course, took no part in

the correspondence. Makar Ivanovitch wrote from all parts of Russia, from the towns and monasteries in which he sometimes stayed for a considerable time. He had become a pilgrim, as it is called. He never asked for anything ; but he invariably turned up at home once in three years on a holiday, and stayed with my mother, who always, as it happened, had her own lodgings apart from Versilov's. Of this I shall have to say more later, here I will only mention that Makar Ivanovitch did not loll on the sofa in the drawing-room, but always sat discreetly somewhere in the background. He never stayed for long : five days or a week.

I have omitted to say that he had the greatest affection and respect for his surname, " Dolgoruky." Of course this was ludicrous stupidity. And what was most stupid was that he prized his name just because there were princes of the name. A strange, topsy-turvy idea.

I have said that the family were always together, but I mean except for me, of course. I was like an outcast, and, almost from my birth, had been with strangers. But this was done with no special design, but simply because it had happened so. When I was born my mother was still young and good-looking, and therefore necessary to Versilov ; and a screaming child, of course, was always a nuisance, especially when they were travelling. That was how it happened that until I was nineteen I had scarcely seen my mother except on two or three brief occasions. It was not due to my mother's wishes, but to Versilov's lofty disregard for people.

7

Now for something quite different. A month earlier, that is a month before the 19th of September, I had made up my mind in Moscow to renounce them all, and to retire into my own idea, finally. I record that expression " retire into my own idea " because that expression may explain my leading motive, my object in life. What that " idea " of mine is, of that there will be only too much said later. In the solitary years of my dreamy life in Moscow it sprang up in my mind before I had left the sixth form of the grammar school, and from that time perhaps never left me for an instant. It absorbed my whole existence. Till then I had lived in dreams ; from my childhood upwards I have lived in the world of dreams, always of a certain colour. But after this great and all-absorbing idea turned up,

my dreams gained in force, took a definite shape ; and became rational instead of foolish. School did not hinder my dreams, and it did not hinder the idea either. I must add, however, that I came out badly in the leaving exam, though I had always been one of the first in all the forms up to the seventh, and this was a result of that same idea, a result of a false deduction from it perhaps. So it was not school work that hindered the idea, but the idea that hindered school work, and it hindered university work too. When I left school I intended at once not only to cut myself off from my family completely, but from all the world if necessary, though I was only nineteen at the time. I wrote through a suitable person to tell them to leave me entirely alone, not to send me any more money for my maintenance, and, if possible, to forget me altogether (that is if they ever did remember me), and finally "nothing would induce" me to enter the university. An alternative presented itself from which there was no escaping : to refuse to enter the university and go on with my education, or to defer putting my idea into practice for another four years. I went for the idea without faltering, for I was absolutely resolved about it. In answer to my letter, which had not been addressed to him, Versilov, my father, whom I had only seen once for a moment when I was a boy of ten (though even in that moment he made a great impression upon me), summoned me to Petersburg in a letter written in his own hand, promising me a private situation. This cold, proud man, careless and disdainful of me, after bringing me into the world and packing me off to strangers, knew nothing of me at all and had never even regretted his conduct ; who knows, perhaps he had only a vague and confused idea of my existence, for it appeared afterwards that the money for my maintenance in Moscow had not been furnished by him but by other people. Yet the summons of this man who so suddenly remembered me and deigned to write to me with his own hand, by flattering me, decided my fate. Strange to say, what pleased me in his note (one tiny sheet of paper) was that he said not a word about the university, did not ask me to change my mind, did not blame me for not wanting to continue my studies, did not, in fact, trot out any parental flourishes of the kind usual in such cases, and yet this was wrong of him since it betrayed more than anything his lack of interest in me. I resolved to go, the more readily because it would not hinder my great idea. "I'll see what will come of it," I argued, "in any

case I shall associate with them only for a time ; possibly a very short time. But as soon as I see that this step, tentative and trifling as it is, is keeping me from the *great object*, I shall break off with them, throw up everything and retreat into my shell." Yes, into my shell ! " I shall hide in it like a tortoise." This comparison pleased me very much. " I shall not be alone," I went on musing, as I walked about Moscow those last days like one possessed. " I shall never be alone as I have been for so many awful years till now ; I shall have my idea to which I will never be false, even if I like them all there, and they make me happy, and I live with them for ten years !" It was, I may remark beforehand, just that impression, that is, just the twofold nature of the plans and objects definitely formed before leaving Moscow, and never out of my mind for one instant in Petersburg (for I hardly think there was a day in Petersburg which I had not fixed on beforehand as the final date for breaking off with them and going away), it was this, I say, that was, I believe, one of the chief causes of many of the indiscretions I have been guilty of during this year, many nasty things, many even low things, and stupid ones of course. To be sure, a father, something I had never had before, had appeared upon the scene. This thought intoxicated me as I made my preparations in Moscow and sat in the railway carriage. That he was my father would be nothing. I was not fond of sentimentality, but this man had humiliated me and had not cared to know me, while all those years I had been chewing away at my dreams of him, if one may use such an expression. From my childhood upward, my dreams were all coloured by him ; all hovered about him as the final goal. I don't know whether I hated him or loved him ; but his figure dominated the future and all my schemes of life. And this happened of itself. It grew up with me.

Another thing which influenced me in leaving Moscow was a tremendous circumstance, a temptation which even then, three months before my departure (before Petersburg had been mentioned), set my heart leaping and throbbing. I was drawn to this unknown ocean by the thought that I could enter it as the lord and master of other people's destinies, and what people, too ! But the feelings that were surging in my heart were generous and not despotic—I hasten to declare it that my words may not be mistaken. Moreover, Versilov might think (if he ever deigned to think of me) that a small boy who had just left

school, a raw youth, was coming who would be agape with wonder at everything. And meanwhile I knew all his private life, and had about me a document of the utmost importance, for which (I know that now for a fact) he would have given some years of his life, if I had told him the secret at the time. But I notice that I am talking in riddles. One cannot describe feelings without facts. Besides which, there will be enough about all this in its proper place; it is with that object I have taken up my pen. Writing like this is like a cloud of words or the ravings of delirium.

8

Finally, to pass once for all to the 19th of September, I will observe briefly and, so to say, cursorily, that I found them all, that is Versilov, my mother and my sister (the latter I saw for the first time in my life) in difficult circumstances, almost destitute, or at least, on the verge of destitution. I knew of this before leaving Moscow, but yet I was not prepared for what I saw. I had been accustomed from childhood to imagine this man, this "future father of mine" in brilliant surroundings, and could not picture him except as the leading figure everywhere. Versilov had never shared the same lodgings with my mother, but had always taken rooms for her apart. He did this, of course, out of regard for their very contemptible "proprieties." But here they were all living together in a little wooden lodge in a back street in the Semyonovsky Polk. All their things were in pawn, so that, without Versilov's knowledge, I gave my mother my secret sixty roubles. *Secret*, because I had saved them up in the course of two years out of my pocket money, which was five roubles a month. I had begun saving from the very day I had conceived my "idea," and so Versilov must know nothing about the money. I trembled at the thought of that.

My help was like a drop in the ocean. My mother worked hard and my sister too took in sewing. Versilov lived in idleness, indulged his whims and kept up a number of his former rather expensive habits. He grumbled terribly, especially at dinner, and he was absolutely despotic in all his ways. But my mother, my sister, Tatyana Pavlovna and the whole family of the late Andronikov (the head of some department who used also to manage Versilov's affairs and had died three months before), consisting of innumerable women, grovelled before him as

though he were a fetish. I had not imagined this. I may remark that nine years before he had been infinitely more elegant. I have said already that I had kept the image of him in my dreams surrounded by a sort of brilliance, and so I could not conceive how it was possible after only nine years for him to look so much older and to be so worn out ; I felt at once sad, sorry, ashamed. The sight of him was one of the most painful of my first impressions on my arrival. Yet he was by no means an old man, he was only forty-five. Looking at him more closely I found in his handsome face something even more striking than what I had kept in my memory. There was less of the brilliance of those days, less external beauty, less elegance even ; but life had, as it were, stamped on that face something far more interesting than before.

Meanwhile poverty was not the tenth or twentieth fraction of his misfortunes, and I knew that. There was something infinitely more serious than poverty, apart from the fact that there was still a hope that Versilov might win the lawsuit he had been contesting for the last year with the Princes Sokolsky and might in the immediate future come into an estate to the value of seventy thousand or more. I have said above that Versilov had run through three fortunes in his life, and here another fortune was coming to his rescue again ! The case was to be settled very shortly. It was just then that I arrived. It is true that no one would lend him money on his expectations, there was nowhere he could borrow, and meanwhile they had to suffer.

Versilov visited no one, though he sometimes was out for the whole day. It was more than a year since he had been *banished* from society. In spite of all my efforts, this scandal remained for the most part a mystery though I had been a whole month in Petersburg. Was Versilov guilty or not guilty—that was what mattered to me, that is what I had come to Petersburg for ! Every one had turned against him—among others all the influential and distinguished people with whom he had been particularly clever in maintaining relations all his life—in consequence of rumours of an extremely low and—what was much worse in the eyes of the “ world ”—scandalous action which he was said to have committed more than a year ago in Germany. It was even reported that he had received a slap in the face from Prince Sokolsky (one of those with whom he was now in litigation) and had not followed it by a challenge. Even his children (the

legitimate ones), his son and daughter, had turned against him and were holding aloof. It is true that through the influence of the Fanariotovs and old Prince Sokolsky (who had been a friend of Versilov) the son and daughter moved in the very highest circles. Yet, watching him all that month, I saw a haughty man who had rather cast off "society" than been cast off by it, so independent was his air. But had he the right to look like that—that was the question that agitated me. I absolutely had to find out the whole truth at the earliest possible date, for I had come—to judge this man. I still kept my power hidden from him, but I had either to accept him or to reject him altogether. But that would have been too painful to me and I was in torment. I will confess it frankly at last : the man was dear to me !

And meanwhile I was living in the same flat with him, working, and scarcely refraining from being rude. In fact I did not refrain. After spending a month with him I became more convinced every day that I could not possibly appeal to him for a full explanation. This man in his pride remained an enigma to me, while he wounded me deeply. He was positively charming to me, and jested with me, but I should have liked quarrels better than such jests. There was a certain note of ambiguity about all my conversations with him, or more simply, a strange irony on his part. From our first meeting, on my arrival from Moscow, he did not treat me seriously. I never could make out why he took up this line. It is true that by this means he succeeded in remaining impenetrable, but I would not have humbled myself so far as to ask him to treat me seriously. Besides, he had certain wonderful and irresistible ways which I did not know how to deal with. In short he behaved to me as though I were the greenest of raw youths, which I was hardly able to endure, though I knew it would be so. I, too, gave up talking seriously in consequence, and waited ; in fact, I almost gave up talking altogether. I waited for a person on whose arrival in Petersburg I might finally learn the truth ; that was my last hope. In any case I prepared myself for a final rupture, and had already taken all necessary measures. I was sorry for my mother but—"either him or me," that was the choice I meant to offer her and my sister. I had even fixed on the day ; and meanwhile I went to my work.

CHAPTER II

1

ON that 19th of September I was also to receive my first salary for the first month of my work in Petersburg in my "private" situation. They did not ask me about this job but simply handed me over to it, I believe, on the very first day of my arrival. This was very unmannerly, and it was almost my duty to protest. The job turned out to be a situation in the household of old Prince Sokolsky. But to protest then would have meant breaking off relations on the spot, and though I was not in the least afraid of that, it would have hindered the attainment of my primary objects; and so in silence I accepted the job for the time, maintaining my dignity by silence. I must explain from the very first that this Prince Sokolsky, a wealthy man and a privy councillor, was no relation at all of the Moscow princes of that name (who had been poor and insignificant for several generations past) with whom Versilov was contesting his lawsuit. It was only that they had the same name. Yet the old prince took a great interest in them, and was particularly fond of one of them who was, so to speak, the head of the family—a young officer. Versilov had till recently had an immense influence in this old man's affairs and had been his friend, a strange sort of friend, for the poor old prince, as I detected, was awfully afraid of him, not only at the time when I arrived on the scene, but had apparently been always afraid of him all through their friendship. They had not seen each other for a long time, however. The dishonourable conduct of which Versilov was accused concerned the old prince's family. But Tatyana Pavlovna had intervened and it was through her that I was placed in attendance on the old prince, who wanted a "young man" in his study. At the same time it appeared that he was very anxious to do something to please Versilov, to make, so to speak, the first advance to him, and Versilov *allowed* it. The old man had made the arrangement in the absence of his daughter, the widow of a general, who would certainly not have permitted him to take this step. Of this later, but I may remark that the strangeness of his relations with Versilov impressed me in the latter's favour. It occurred to the imagination that if the head of the injured family still cherished a respect for Versilov, the

rumours of Versilov's scoundrelly behaviour must be absurd, or at least exaggerated, and might have more than one explanation. It was partly this circumstance which kept me from protesting against the situation ; in accepting it I hoped to verify all this.

Tatyana Pavlovna was playing a strange part at the time when I found her in Petersburg. I had almost forgotten her, and had not at all expected to find her possessed of such influence. She had met me three or four times during my life in Moscow, and had always turned up, goodness knows where from, sent by some one or other whenever I needed fitting out—to go into Touchard's boarding school, or two and a half years later, when I was being transferred to the grammar school and sent to board with Nikolay Semyonovitch, a friend I shall never forget. She used to spend the whole day with me and inspect my linen and my clothes. She drove about the town with me, took me to Kuznetsky Street, bought me what was necessary, provided me with a complete outfit, in fact, down to the smallest box and pen-knife. All the while she nagged at me, scolded me, reproached me, cross-examined me, quoting as examples to me various phantom boys among her relations and acquaintances who were all said to be better than I was. She even pinched me and actually gave me several vicious pokes. After fitting me out and installing me, she would disappear completely for several years. On this occasion, too, she turned up at once on my arrival to instal me again. She was a spare little figure with a sharp nose like a beak, and sharp little eyes like a bird's. She waited on Versilov like a slave, and grovelled before him as though he were the Pope, but she did it through conviction. But I soon noticed with surprise that she was respected by all and, what was more, known to every one everywhere. Old Prince Sokolsky treated her with extraordinary deference ; it was the same thing with his family ; the same with Versilov's haughty children ; the same with the Fanariotovs ; and yet she lived by taking in sewing, and washing lace, and fetched work from the shops. She and I fell out at the first word, for she thought fit to begin nagging at me just as she had done six years before. And from that time forward we quarrelled every day, but that did not prevent us from sometimes talking, and I must confess that by the end of the month I began to like her : for her independent character, I believe. But I did not tell her so.

I realized at once that I had only been given this post at the

old invalid prince's in order to "amuse" him, and that that was my whole duty. Naturally this was humiliating, and I should at once have taken steps, but the queer old fellow soon made an unexpected impression upon me. I felt something like compassion for him, and by the end of the month I had become strangely attached to him; anyway I gave up my intention of being rude. He was not more than sixty, however, but there had been a great to-do with him a year and a half before, when he suddenly had a fit. He was travelling somewhere and went mad on the way, so there was something of a scandal of which people talked in Petersburg. As is usual in such cases, he was instantly taken abroad, but five months later he suddenly reappeared perfectly well, though he gave up the service. Versilov asserted seriously (and with noticeable heat) that he had not been insane at all, but had only had some sort of nervous fit. I promptly made a note of Versilov's warmth about it. I may observe, however, that I was disposed to share his opinion. The old man only showed perhaps an excessive frivolity at times, not quite appropriate to his years, of which, so they say, there was no sign in him before. It was said that in the past he had been a councillor of some sort, and on one occasion had quite distinguished himself in some commission with which he had been charged. After knowing him for a whole month, I should never have supposed he could have any special capacity as a councillor. People observed (though I saw nothing of it) that after his fit he developed a marked disposition to rush into matrimony, and it was said that he had more than once reverted to this idea during the last eighteen months, that it was known in society and a subject of interest. But as this weakness by no means fell in with the interests of certain persons of the prince's circle, the old man was guarded on all sides. He had not a large family of his own; he had been a widower for twenty years, and had only one daughter, the general's widow, who was now daily expected from Moscow. She was a young person whose strength of will was evidently a source of apprehension to the old man. But he had masses of distant relatives, principally through his wife, who were all almost beggars, besides a multitude of protégés of all sorts, male and female, all of whom expected to be mentioned in his will, and so they all supported the general's widow in keeping watch over the old man. He had, moreover, had one strange propensity from his youth up (I don't know whether it was ridiculous or not) for making matches for poor girls. He

had been finding husbands for the last twenty-five years—for distant relations, for the step-daughters of his wife's cousins, for his god-daughters ; he even found a husband for the daughter of his house porter. He used to take his protégées into his house when they were little girls, provide them with governesses and French mademoiselles, then have them educated in the best boarding schools, and finally marry them off with a dowry. The calls upon him were continually increasing. When his protégées were married they naturally produced more little girls ; and all these little girls became his protégées. He was always having to stand as god-father. The whole lot turned up to congratulate him on his birthdays, and it was all very agreeable to him.

I noticed at once that the old man had lurking in his mind a painful conviction (it was impossible to avoid noticing it, indeed) that every one had begun to look at him strangely, that every one had begun to behave to him not as before, not as to a healthy man. This impression never left him even at the liveliest social functions. The old man had become suspicious, had begun to detect something in every one's eyes. He was evidently tormented by the idea that every one suspected him of being mad. He sometimes looked mistrustfully even at me. And if he had found out that some one was spreading or upholding such rumours, the benevolent old man would have become his implacable foe. I beg that this circumstance may be noted. I may add that it was what decided me from the first day not to be rude to him ; in fact, I was glad if I were able sometimes to amuse or entertain him ; I don't think that this confession can cast any slur on my dignity.

The greater part of his money was invested. He had since his illness become a partner in a large joint stock enterprise, a very safe one, however. And though the management was in other hands he took a great interest in it, too, attended the shareholders' meetings, was appointed a director, presided at the board-meetings, opposed motions, was noisy and obviously enjoyed himself. He was very fond of making speeches : every one could judge of his brain anyway. And in general he developed a great fancy for introducing profound reflections and *bon mots* in his conversation, even in the intimacy of private life. I quite understand it.

On the ground floor of his house there was something like a private office where a single clerk kept the books and accounts and also managed the house. This clerk was quite equal to the

work alone, though he had some government job as well, but by the prince's own wish I was engaged to assist him ; but I was immediately transferred to the prince's study, and often had no work before me, not even books or papers to keep up appearances. I am writing now sobered by time ; and about many things feel now almost like an outsider ; but how can I describe the depression (I recall it vividly at this moment) that weighed down my heart in those days, and still more, the excitement which reached such a pitch of confused feverishness that I did not sleep at night—all due to my impatience, to the riddles I had set myself to solve.

2

To ask for money, even a salary, is a most disgusting business, especially if one feels in the recesses of one's conscience that one has not quite earned it. Yet the evening before, my mother had been whispering to my sister apart from Versilov ("so as not to worry Andrey Petrovitch") that she intended to take the ikon which for some reason was particularly precious to her to the pawnbroker's. I was to be paid fifty roubles a month, but I had no idea how I should receive the money ; nothing had been said to me about it.

Meeting the clerk downstairs three days before, I inquired of him whom one was to ask for one's salary. He looked at me with a smile as though of astonishment (he did not like me).

"Oh, you get a salary ? "

I thought that on my answering he would add :

"What for ? "

But he merely answered drily, that he "knew nothing about it," and buried himself in the ruled exercise book into which he was copying accounts from some bills.

He was not unaware, however, that I did something. A fortnight before I had spent four days over work he had given me, making a fair copy, and as it turned out, almost a fresh draft of something. It was a perfect avalanche of "ideas" of the prince's which he was preparing to present to the board of directors. These had to be put together into a whole and clothed in suitable language. I spent a whole day with the prince over it afterwards, and he argued very warmly with me, but was well satisfied in the end. But I don't know whether he read the paper or not. I say nothing of the two or three letters, also about business, which I wrote at his request.

It was annoying to me to have to ask for my salary because I had already decided to give up my situation, foreseeing that I should be obliged through unavoidable circumstances to go away. When I waked up and dressed that morning in my garret upstairs, I felt that my heart was beating, and though I pooh-poohed it, yet I was conscious of the same excitement as I walked towards the prince's house. That morning there was expected a woman, whose presence I was reckoning upon for the explanation of all that was tormenting me! This was the prince's daughter, the young widow of General Ahmakov, of whom I have spoken already and who was bitterly hostile to Versilov. At last I have written that name! I had never seen her, of course, and could not imagine how I should speak to her or whether I should speak, but I imagined (perhaps on sufficient grounds) that with her arrival there would be some light thrown on the darkness surrounding Versilov in my eyes. I could not remain unmoved. It was frightfully annoying that at the very outset I should be so cowardly and awkward; it was awfully interesting, and, still more, sickening—three impressions at once. I remember every detail of that day!

My old prince knew nothing of his daughter's probable arrival, and was not expecting her to return from Moscow for a week. I had learnt this the evening before quite by chance: Tatyana Pavlovna, who had received a letter from Mme. Ahmakov, let it out to my mother. Though they were whispering and spoke in veiled allusions, I guessed what was meant. Of course I was not eavesdropping, I simply could not avoid listening when I saw how agitated my mother was at the news of this woman's arrival. Versilov was not in the house.

I did not want to tell the old prince because I could not help noticing all that time how he was dreading her arrival. He had even let drop three days before, though only by a timid and remote hint, that he was afraid of her coming on my account; that is that he would have trouble about me. I must add, however, that in his own family he preserved his independence and was still master in his own house, especially in money matters. My first judgment of him was that he was a regular old woman, but I was afterwards obliged to revise my opinion, and to recognize that, if he were an old woman, there was still a fund of obstinacy, if not of real manliness, in him. There were moments when one could hardly do anything with him in spite of his apprehensive and yielding character. Versilov explained this to me more

fully later. I recall now with interest that the old prince and I scarcely ever spoke of his daughter, we seemed to avoid it : I in particular avoided it, while he, on his side, avoided mentioning Versilov, and I guessed that he would not answer if I were to ask him one of the delicate questions which interested me so much.

If anyone cares to know what we did talk about all that month I must answer that we really talked of everything in the world, but always of the queerest things. I was delighted with the extraordinary simplicity with which he treated me. Sometimes I looked with extreme astonishment at the old man and wondered how he could ever have presided at meetings. If he had been put into our school and in the fourth class too, what a nice school-fellow he would have made. More than once, too, I was surprised by his face ; it was very serious-looking, almost handsome and thin ; he had thick curly grey hair, wide-open eyes ; and he was besides slim and well built ; but there was an unpleasant, almost unseemly, peculiarity about his face, it would suddenly change from excessive gravity to an expression of exaggerated playfulness, which was a complete surprise to a person who saw him for the first time. I spoke of this to Versilov, who listened with curiosity ; I fancy that he had not expected me to be capable of making such observations ; he observed casually that this had come upon the prince since his illness and probably only of late.

We used to talk principally of two abstract subjects—of God and of His existence, that is, whether there was a God or not—and of women. The prince was very religious and sentimental. He had in his study a huge stand of ikons with a lamp burning before them. But something seemed to come over him—and he would begin expressing doubts of the existence of God and would say astounding things, obviously challenging me to answer. I was not much interested in the question, speaking generally, but we both got very hot about it and quite genuinely. I recall all those conversations even now with pleasure. But what he liked best was gossiping about women, and he was sometimes positively disappointed at my disliking this subject of conversation, and making such a poor response to it.

He began talking in that style as soon as I went in that morning. I found him in a jocose mood, though I had left him the night before extremely melancholy. Meanwhile it was absolutely necessary for me to settle the matter of the salary—before the arrival of certain persons. I reckoned that that morning we should certainly be interrupted (it was not for nothing my heart

was beating) and then perhaps I should not be able to bring myself to speak of money. But I did not know how to begin about money and I was naturally angry at my stupidity. And, as I remember now in my vexation at some too jocular question of his, I blurted out my views on women point-blank and with great vigour.

And this led him to be more expansive with me than ever.

3

"I don't like women because they've no manners, because they are awkward, because they are not self-reliant, and because they wear unseemly clothes!" I wound up my long tirade incoherently.

"My dear boy, spare us!" he cried, immensely delighted, which enraged me more than ever.

I am ready to give way and be trivial only about trifles. I never give way in things that are really important. In trifles, in little matters of etiquette, you can do anything you like with me, and I curse this peculiarity in myself. From a sort of putrid good nature I've sometimes been ready to knuckle under to some fashionable snob, simply flattered by his affability, or I've let myself be drawn into argument with a fool, which is more unpardonable than anything. All this is due to lack of self-control, and to my having grown up in seclusion, but next day it would be the same thing again: that's why I was sometimes taken for a boy of sixteen. But instead of gaining self-control I prefer even now to bottle myself up more tightly than ever in my shell—"I may be clumsy—but good-bye!"—however misanthropic that may seem. I say that seriously and for good. But I don't write this with reference to the prince or even with reference to that conversation.

"I'm not speaking for your entertainment," I almost shouted at him. "I am speaking from conviction."

"But how do you mean that women have no manners and are unseemly in their dress? That's something new."

"They have no manners. Go to the theatre, go for a walk. Every man knows the right side of the road, when they meet they step aside, he keeps to the right, I keep to the right. A woman, that is a lady—it's ladies I'm talking about—dashes straight at you as though she doesn't see you, as though you were absolutely bound to skip aside and make way for her. I'm prepared

to make way for her as a weaker creature, but why has she the right, why is she so sure it's my duty—that's what's offensive. I always curse when I meet them. And after that they cry out that they're oppressed and demand equality; a fine sort of equality when she tramples me under foot and fills my mouth with sand."

"With sand?"

"Yes, because they're not decently dressed—it's only depraved people don't notice it. In the law-courts they close the doors when they're trying cases of indecency. Why do they allow it in the streets, where there are more people? They openly hang bustles on behind to look as though they had fine figures; openly! I can't help noticing; the young lad notices it too; and the child that's growing into a boy notices it too; it's abominable. Let old rakes admire them and run after them with their tongues hanging out, but there is such a thing as the purity of youth which must be protected. One can only despise them. They walk along the parade with trains half a yard long behind them, sweeping up the dust. It's a pleasant thing to walk behind them: you must run to get in front of them, or jump on one side, or they'll sweep pounds of dust into your mouth and nose. And what's more it's silk, and they'll drag it over the stones for a couple of miles simply because it's the fashion, when their husbands get five hundred roubles a year in the Senate: that's where bribes come in! I've always despised them. I've cursed them aloud and abused them."

Though I describe this conversation somewhat humorously in the style that was characteristic of me at that time, my ideas are still the same.

"And how do you come off?" the prince queried.

"I curse them and turn away. They feel it, of course, but they don't show it, they prance along majestically without turning their heads. But I only came to actual abuse on one occasion with two females, both wearing tails on the parade; of course I didn't use bad language, but I said aloud that long tails were offensive."

"Did you use that expression?"

"Of course I did. To begin with, they trample upon the rules of social life, and secondly, they raise the dust, and the parade is meant for all. I walk there, other men walk, Fyodor, Ivan, it's the same for all. So that's what I said. And I dislike the way women walk altogether, when you look at their back view; I told them that too, but only hinted at it."

" But, my dear boy, you might get into serious trouble ; they might have hauled you off to the police station."

" They couldn't do anything. They had nothing to complain of : a man walks beside them talking to himself. Every one has the right to express his convictions to the air. I spoke in the abstract without addressing them. They began wrangling with me of themselves ; they began to abuse me, they used much worse language than I did ; they called me milksop, said I ought to go without my dinner, called me a nihilist, and threatened to hand me over to the police ; said that I'd attacked them because they were alone and weak women, but if there'd been a man with them I should soon sing another tune. I very coolly told them to leave off annoying me, and I would cross to the other side of the street. And to show them that I was not in the least afraid of their men, and was ready to accept their challenge, I would follow them to their house, walking twenty paces behind them, then I would stand before the house and wait for their men. And so I did."

" You don't say so ? "

" Of course it was stupid, but I was roused. They dragged me over two miles in the heat, as far as the 'institutions,' they went into a wooden house of one storey—a very respectable-looking one I must admit—one could see in at the windows a great many flowers, two canaries, three pug-dogs and engravings in frames. I stood for half an hour in the street facing the house. They peeped out two or three times, then pulled down all the blinds. Finally an elderly government clerk came out of the little gate ; judging from his appearance he had been asleep and had been waked up on purpose ; he was not actually in a dressing-gown, but he was in a very domestic-looking attire. He stood at the gate, folded his hands behind him, and proceeded to stare at me—I at him. Then he looked away, then gazed at me again, and suddenly began smiling at me. I turned and walked away."

" My dear boy, how Schiller-esque ! I've always wondered at you ; with your rosy cheeks, your face blooming with health, and such an aversion, one may say, for women ! How is it possible that woman does not make a certain impression on you at your age ? Why, when I was a boy of eleven, *mon cher*, my tutor used to notice that I looked too attentively at the statues in the Summer Gardens."

" You would like me to take up with some Josephine here,

and come and tell you all about it! Rather not; I saw a woman completely naked when I was thirteen; I've had a feeling of disgust ever since."

"Do you mean it? But, *cher enfant*, about a fresh, beautiful woman there's a scent of apples; there's nothing disgusting."

"In the little boarding school I was at before I went to the grammar school, there was a boy called Lambert. He was always thrashing me, for he was three years older than I was, and I used to wait on him, and take off his boots. When he was going to be confirmed an abbé, called Rigaud, came to congratulate him on his first communion, and they dissolved in tears on each other's necks, and the abbé hugged him tightly to his bosom. I shed tears, too, and felt very envious. He left school when his father died, and for two years I saw nothing of him. Then I met him in the street. He said he would come and see me. By that time I was at the grammar school and living at Nikolay Semyonovitch's. He came in the morning, showed me five hundred roubles, and told me to go with him. Though he had thrashed me two years before, he had always wanted my company, not simply to take off his boots, but because he liked to tell me things. He told me that he had taken the money that day out of his mother's desk, to which he had made a false key, for legally all his father's money was his, and so much the worse for her if she wouldn't give it to him. He said that the Abbé Rigaud had been to lecture him the day before, that he'd come in, stood over him, begun whimpering, and described all sorts of horrors, lifting up his hands to heaven.

"And I pulled out a knife and told him I'd cut his throat" (he pronounced it 'thr-r-roat'). We went to Kuznetsky Street. On the way he informed me that his mother was the abbé's mistress, and that he'd found it out, and he didn't care a hang for anything, and that all they said about the sacrament was rubbish. He said a great deal more, and I felt frightened. In Kuznetsky Street he bought a double-barrelled gun, a game bag, cartridges, a riding-whip, and afterwards a pound of sweets. We were going out into the country to shoot, and on the way we met a bird-catcher with cages of birds. Lambert bought a canary from him. In a wood he let the canary go, as it couldn't fly far after being in the cage, and began shooting at it, but did not hit it. It was the first time in his life he had fired off a gun, but he had wanted to buy a gun years before; at Touchard's even we were dreaming of one.

He was almost choking with excitement. His hair was black, awfully black, his face was white and red, like a mask, he had a long aquiline nose, such as are common with Frenchmen, white teeth and black eyes. He tied the canary by a thread to a branch, and an inch away fired off both barrels, and the bird was blown into a hundred feathers. Then we returned, drove to an hotel, took a room, and began eating, and drinking champagne ; a lady came in. . . . I remember being awfully impressed by her being so splendidly dressed ; she wore a green silk dress. It was then I saw . . . all that I told you about. . . . Afterwards, when we had begun drinking, he began taunting and abusing her ; she was sitting with nothing on, he took away her clothes and when she began scolding and asking for her clothes to dress again, he began with all his might beating her with the riding-whip on her bare shoulders. I got up, seized him by the hair, and so neatly that I threw him on the ground at once. He snatched up a fork and stuck it in my leg. Hearing the outcry, people ran in, and I had time to run away. Ever since then it's disgusted me to think of nakedness ; and, believe me, she was a beauty."

As I talked, the prince's face changed from a playful expression to one of great sadness.

"*Mon pauvre enfant !* I have felt convinced all along that there have been very many unhappy days in your childhood."

"Please don't distress yourself !"

"But you were alone, you told me so yourself, but for that Lambert ; you have described it so well, that canary, the confirmation and shedding tears on the abbé's breast, and only a year or so later saying that of his mother and the abbé ! . . . Oh, *mon cher*, the question of childhood in our day is truly awful ; for a time those golden heads, curly and innocent, flutter before one and look at one with their clear eycs like angels of God, or little birds, and afterwards . . . and afterwards it turns out that it would have been better if they had not grown up at all !"

"How soft you are, prince ! It's as though you had little children of your own. Why, you haven't any and never will have."

"*Tiens !*" His whole face was instantly transformed, "that's just what Alexandra Petrovna said—the day before yesterday, he-he !—Alexandra Petrovna Sinitsky—you must have met her here three weeks ago—only fancy, the day before

yesterday, in reply to my jocular remark that if I do get married now I could set my mind at rest, there'd be no children, she suddenly said, and with such spite, 'On the contrary, there certainly would be ; people like you always have them, they'll arrive the very first year, you'll see.' He-he ! And they've all taken it into their heads, for some reason, that I'm going to get married ; but though it was spiteful I admit it was—witty ! "

" Witty—but insulting ! "

" Oh, *cher enfant*, one can't take offence at some people. There's nothing I prize so much in people as wit, which is evidently disappearing among us ; though what Alexandra Petrovna said—can hardly be considered wit."

" What ? What did you say ? " I said, catching at his words—" one can't take offence at some people. That's just it ! Some people are not worth noticing—an excellent principle ! Just the one I need. I shall make a note of it. You sometimes say the most delightful things, prince."

He beamed all over.

" *N'est ce pas ? Cher enfant*, true wit is vanishing ; the longer one lives the more one sees it. *Eh, mais . . . c'est moi qui connaît les femmes !* Believe me, the life of every woman, whatever she may profess, is nothing but a perpetual search for some one to submit to . . . so to speak a thirst for submission. And mark my words, there's not a single exception."

" Perfectly true ! Magnificent ! " I cried rapturously. Another time we should have launched into philosophical disquisitions on this theme, lasting for an hour, but suddenly I felt as though something had bitten me, and I flushed all over. I suddenly imagined that in admiring his *bon mots* I was flattering him as a prelude to asking for money, and that he would certainly think so as soon as I began to ask for it. I purposely mention this now.

" Prince, I humbly beg you to pay me at once the fifty roubles you owe me for the month," I fired off like a shot, in a tone of irritability that was positively rude.

I remember (for I remember every detail of that morning) that there followed between us then a scene most disgusting in its realistic truth. For the first minute he did not understand me, stared at me for some time without understanding what money I was talking about. It was natural that he should not realize I was receiving a salary—and indeed, why should I ? It is true that he proceeded to assure me afterwards that he had

forgotten, and when he grasped the meaning of my words, he instantly began taking out fifty roubles, but he was flustered and turned crimson. Seeing how things stood, I got up and abruptly announced that I could not take the money now, that in what I had been told about a salary they had made a mistake, or deceived me to induce me to accept the situation, and that I saw only too well now, that I did nothing to earn one, for I had no duties to perform. The prince was alarmed and began assuring me that I was of the greatest use to him, that I should be still more useful to him in the future, and that fifty roubles was so little that he should certainly add to it, for he was bound to do so, and that he had made the arrangement himself with Tatyana Pavlovna, but had "unpardonably forgotten it." I flushed crimson and declared resolutely that it was degrading for me to receive a salary for telling scandalous stories of how I had followed two draggle-tails to the 'institutions,' that I had not been engaged to amuse him but to do work, and that if there was no work I must stop it, and so on, and so on. I could never have imagined that anyone could have been so scared as he was by my words. Of course it ended in my ceasing to protest, and his somehow pressing the fifty roubles into my hand: to this day I recall with a blush that I took it. Everything in the world always ends in meanness, and what was worst of all, he somehow succeeded in almost proving to me that I had unmistakably earned the money, and I was so stupid as to believe it, and so it was absolutely impossible to avoid taking it.

"*Cher, cher enfant!*" he cried, kissing and embracing me (I must admit I was on the point of tears myself, goodness knows why, though I instantly restrained myself, and even now I blush as I write it). "My dear boy, you're like one of the family to me now; in the course of this month you've won a warm place in my heart! In 'society' you get 'society' and nothing else. Katerina Nikolaevna (that was his daughter's name) is a magnificent woman and I'm proud of her, but she often, my dear boy, very often, wounds me. And as for these girls (*elles sont charmantes*) and their mothers who come on my birthday, they merely bring their embroidery and never know how to tell one anything. I've accumulated over sixty cushions embroidered by them, all dogs and stags. I like them very much, but with you I feel as if you were my own—not son, but brother, and I particularly like it when you argue against me; you're literary, you have read, you can be enthusiastic. . . ."

"I have read nothing, and I'm not literary at all. I used to read what I came across, but I've read nothing for two years and I'm not going to read."

"Why aren't you going to?"

"I have other objects."

"*Cher . . .* it's a pity if at the end of your life you say, like me, '*Je sais tout, mais je ne sais rien de bon.*' I don't know in the least what I have lived in this world for! But . . . I'm so much indebted to you . . . and I should like, in fact . . ."

He suddenly broke off, and with an air of fatigue sank into brooding. After any agitation (and he might be overcome by agitation at any minute, goodness knows why) he generally seemed for some time to lose his faculties and his power of self-control, but he soon recovered, so that it really did not matter. We sat still for a few minutes. His very full lower lip hung down . . . what surprised me most of all was that he had suddenly spoken of his daughter, and with such openness too. I put it down, of course, to his being upset.

"*Cher enfant*, you don't mind my addressin' you so familiarly, do you?" broke from him suddenly.

"Not in the least. I must confess that at the very first I was rather offended by it and felt inclined to address you in the same way, but I saw it was stupid because you didn't speak like that to humiliate me."

But he had forgotten his question and was no longer listening.

"Well, how's your *father*?" he said suddenly raising his eyes and looking dreamily at me.

I winced. In the first place he called Versilov my *father*, which he had never permitted himself to do before, and secondly, he began of himself to speak of Versilov, which he had never done before.

"He sits at home without a penny and is very gloomy," I answered briefly, though I was burning with curiosity.

"Yes, about money. His lawsuit is being decided to-day, and I'm expecting Prince Sergay as soon as he arrives. He promised to come straight from the court to me. Their whole future turns on it. It's a question of sixty or seventy thousand. Of course, I've always wished well to Andrey Petrovitch" (Versilov's name), "and I believe he'll win the suit, and Prince Sergay has no case. It's a point of law."

"The case will be decided to-day?" I cried, amazed. The thought that Versilov had not deigned to tell me even that

was a great shock to me. "Then he hasn't told my mother, perhaps not anyone," it suddenly struck me. "What strength of will!"

"Then is Prince Sokolsky in Petersburg?" was another idea that occurred to me immediately.

"He arrived yesterday. He has come straight from Berlin expressly for this day."

That too was an extremely important piece of news for me. And he would be here to-day, that man who had given *him* a slap in the face!

"Well, what then?" The old prince's face suddenly changed again. "He'll preach religion as before and . . . and . . . maybe run after little girls, unfledged girls, again. He-he! There's a very funny little story about that going about even now. . . . He-he!"

"Who will preach? Who will run after little girls?"

"Andrey Petrovitch! Would you believe it, he used to pester us all in those days. 'Where are we going?' he would say. 'What are we thinking about?' That was about it, anyway. He frightened and chastened us. 'If you're religious,' he'd say, 'why don't you become a monk?' That was about what he expected. *Mais quelle idée!* If it's right, isn't it too severe? He was particularly fond of frightening me with the Day of Judgment—me of all people!"

"I've noticed nothing of all this, and I've been living with him a month," I answered, listening with impatience. I felt fearfully vexed that he hadn't pulled himself together and was rambling on so incoherently.

"It's only that he doesn't talk about that now, but, believe me, it was so. He's a clever man, and undoubtedly very learned; but is his intellect quite sound? All this happened to him after his three years abroad. And I must own he shocked me very much and shocked every one. *Cher enfant, j'aime le bon Dieu.* . . . I believe, I believe as much as I can, but I really was angry at the time. Supposing I did put on a frivolous manner, I did it on purpose because I was annoyed—and besides, the basis of my objection was as serious as it has been from the beginning of the world. 'If there is a higher Being,' I said, 'and He has a *personal* existence, and isn't some sort of diffused spirit for creation, some sort of fluid (for that's even more difficult to understand), where does He live?' *C'était bête*, no doubt, my dear boy, but, you know, all the arguments come to that.

Un domicile is an important thing. He was awfully angry. He had become a Catholic out there."

"I've heard that too. But it was probably nonsense."

"I assure you by everything that's sacred. You've only to look at him. . . . But you say he's changed. But in those days how he used to worry us all! Would you believe it, he used to behave as though he were a saint and his relics were being displayed. He called us to account for our behaviour, I declare he did! Relics! *En voilà un autre!* It's all very well for a monk or a hermit, but here was a man going about in a dress-coat and all the rest of it, and then he sets up as a saint! A strange inclination in a man in good society, and a curious taste, I admit. I say nothing about that; no doubt all that's sacred, and anything may happen. . . . Besides, this is all *l'inconnu*, but it's positively unseemly for a man in good society. If anything happened to me and the offer were made me I swear I should refuse it. I go and dine to-day at the club and then suddenly make a miraculous appearance as a saint! Why, I should be ridiculous. I put all that to him at the time. . . . He used to wear chains."

I turned red with anger.

"Did you see the chains yourself?"

"I didn't see them myself but . . ."

"Then let me tell you that all that is false, a tissue of loathsome fabrications, the calumny of enemies, that is, of one chief and inhuman enemy—for he has only one enemy—your daughter!"

The old prince flared up in his turn.

"*Mon cher*, I beg and insist that from this time forth you never couple with that revolting story the name of my daughter."

I stood up. He was beside himself. His chin was quivering.

"*Cette histoire infame!* . . . I did not believe it, I never would believe it, but . . . they tell me, believe it, believe it, I . . ."

At that instant a footman came in and announced visitors. I dropped into my chair again.

Two ladies came in. They were both young and unmarried. One was a stepdaughter of a cousin of the old prince's deceased wife or something of the sort, a protégée of his for whom he had

already set aside a dowry, and who (I mention it with a view to later events) had money herself : the other was Anna Andreyevna Versilov, the daughter of Versilov, three years older than I. She lived with her brother in the family of Mme. Fanariotov. I had only seen her once before in my life, for a minute in the street, though I had had an encounter, also very brief, with her brother in Moscow. (I may very possibly refer to this encounter later—if I have space, that is, for it is hardly worth recording.) Anna Andreyevna had been from childhood a special favourite of the old prince (Versilov's acquaintance with the prince dated from very long ago). I was so overcome by what had just happened that I did not even stand up on their entrance, though the old prince rose to greet them. Afterwards I thought it would be humiliating to get up, and I remained where I was. What overwhelmed me most was the prince's having shouted at me like that three minutes before, and I did not know whether to go away or not. But the old man, as usual, had already forgotten everything, and was all pleasure and animation at sight of the young ladies. At the very moment of their entrance he hurriedly whispered to me, with a rapid change of expression and a mysterious wink :

“Look at Olympiada, watch her, watch her ; I'll tell you why after. . . .”

I did look at her rather carefully, but I saw nothing special about her. She was a plump, not very tall young lady, with exceedingly red cheeks. Her face was rather pleasing, of the sort that materialists like. She had an expression of kindness, perhaps, but with a touch of something different. She could not have been very brilliant intellectually—that is, not in the higher sense—for one could see cunning in her eyes. She was not more than nineteen. In fact, there was nothing remarkable about her. In our school we should have called her a cushion. (I only give this minute description of her because it will be useful later on.)

Indeed, all I have written hitherto with, apparently, such unnecessary detail is all leading up to what is coming and is necessary for it. It will all come in in its proper place ; I cannot avoid it ; and if it is dull, pray don't read it.

Versilov's daughter was a very different person. She was tall and somewhat slim, with a long and strikingly pale face and splendid black hair. She had large dark eyes with an earnest expression, a small mouth, and most crimson lips. She

was the first woman who did not disgust me by her horrid way of walking. She was thin and slender, however. Her expression was not altogether good-natured, but was dignified. She was twenty-two. There was hardly a trace of resemblance to Versilov in her features, and yet, by some miracle, there was an extraordinary similarity of expression. I do not know whether she was pretty ; that is a matter of taste. They were both very simple in their dress, so that it is not worth while to describe it. I expected to be at once insulted by some glance or gesture of Mlle. Versilov, and I was prepared for it. Her brother had insulted me in Moscow the first time we ever met. She could hardly know me by sight, but no doubt she had heard I was in attendance on the prince. Whatever the prince did or proposed to do at once aroused interest and was looked upon as an event in the whole gang of his relations and expectant beneficiaries, and this was especially so with his sudden partiality for me. I knew for a fact that the old prince was particularly solicitous for Anna Andreyevna's welfare and was on the look-out for a husband for her. But it was more difficult to find a suitor for Mlle. Versilov than for the ladies who embroidered on canvas.

And, lo and behold ! contrary to all my expectations, after shaking hands with the prince and exchanging a few light, conventional phrases with him, she looked at me with marked curiosity, and, seeing that I too was looking at her, bowed to me with a smile. It is true that she had only just come into the room, and so might naturally bow to anyone in it, but her smile was so friendly that it was evidently premeditated ; and, I remember, it gave me a particularly pleasant feeling.

“ And this . . . this is my dear young friend Arkady Andreyevitch Dol . . . ” The prince faltered, noticing that she bowed to me while I remained sitting—and he suddenly broke off ; perhaps he was confused at introducing me to her (that is, in reality, introducing a brother to a sister). The “ cushion ” bowed to me too ; but I suddenly leapt up with a clumsy scrape of my chair : it was a rush of simulated pride, utterly senseless, all due to vanity.

“ Excuse me, prince, I am not Arkady Andreyevitch but Arkady Makarovitch ! ” I rapped out abruptly, utterly forgetting that I ought to have bowed to the ladies. Damnation take that unseemly moment !

“ *Mais tiens !* ” cried the prince, tapping his forehead with his finger.

"Where have you studied?" I heard the stupid question drawled by the "cushion," who came straight up to me.

"In Moscow, at the grammar school."

"Ah! so I have heard. Is the teaching good there?"

"Very good."

I remained standing and answered like a soldier reporting himself.

The young lady's questions were certainly not appropriate, but she did succeed in smoothing over my stupid outbreak and relieving the embarrassment of the prince, who was meanwhile listening with an amused smile to something funny Mlle. Versilov was whispering in his ear, evidently not about me. But I wondered why this girl, who was a complete stranger to me, should put herself out to smooth over my stupid behaviour and all the rest of it. At the same time, it was impossible to imagine that she had addressed me quite casually; it was obviously premeditated. She looked at me with too marked an interest; it was as though she wanted me, too, to notice her as much as possible. I pondered over all this later, and I was not mistaken.

"What, surely not to-day?" the prince cried suddenly, jumping up from his seat.

"Why, didn't you know?" Mlle. Versilov asked in surprise. "Olympie! the prince didn't know that Katerina Nikolaevna would be here to-day. Why, it's to see her we've come. We thought she'd have arrived by the morning train and have been here long ago. She has just driven up to the steps; she's come straight from the station, and she told us to come up and she would be here in a minute. . . . And here she is!"

The side-door opened and—that woman walked in!

I knew her face already from the wonderful portrait of her that hung in the prince's study. I had been scrutinizing the portrait all that month. I spent three minutes in the study in her presence, and I did not take my eyes off her face for a second. But if I had not known her portrait and had been asked, after those three minutes, what she was like, I could not have answered, for all was confusion within me.

I only remember from those three minutes the image of a really beautiful woman, whom the prince was kissing and signing with the cross, and who looked quickly at once—the very minute she came in—at me. I distinctly heard the prince muttering something, with a little simper, about his new secretary and

mentioning my name, evidently pointing at me. Her face seemed to contract ; she threw a vicious glance at me, and smiled so insolently that I took a sudden step forward, went up to the prince, and muttered, trembling all over and unable to finish my words (I believe my teeth were chattering) :

“ From this time I . . . I’ve business of my own. . . . I’m going.”

And I turned and went out. No one said a word to me, not even the prince ; they all simply stared. The old prince told me afterwards that I turned so white that he “ was simply frightened.”

But there was no need.

CHAPTER III

1

INDEED there was no need : a higher consideration swallowed up all petty feelings, and one powerful emotion made up to me for everything. I went out in a sort of ecstasy. As I stepped into the street I was ready to sing aloud. To match my mood it was an exquisite morning, sunshine, people out walking, noise, movement, joyousness, and crowds. Why, had not that woman insulted me ? From whom would I have endured that look and that insolent smile without instant protest however stupid it might be. I did not mind about that. Note that she had come expressly to insult me as soon as she could, although she had never seen me. In her eyes I was an “ envoy from Versilov,” and she was convinced at that time, and for long afterwards, that Versilov held her fate in his hands and could ruin her at once if he wanted to, by means of a certain document ; she suspected that, anyway. It was a duel to the death. And yet —I was not offended ! It was an insult, but I did not feel it. How should I ? I was positively glad of it ; though I had come here to hate her I felt I was beginning to love her.

I don’t know whether the spider perhaps does not hate the fly he has marked and is snaring. Dear little fly ! It seems to me that the victim is loved, or at least may be loved. Here I love my enemy ; I am delighted, for instance, that she is so beautiful. I am delighted, madam, that you are so haughty and majestic. If you were meeker it would not be so delightful. You have spat on me—and I am triumphant. If you were

literally to spit in my face I should really not be angry because you—are my victim ; *mine* and not *his*. How fascinating was that idea ! Yes, the secret consciousness of power is more insupportably delightful than open domination. If I were a millionaire I believe I should take pleasure in going about in the oldest clothes and being taken for a destitute man, almost a beggar, being jostled and despised. The consciousness of the truth would be enough for me.

That is how I should interpret my thoughts and happiness, and much of what I was feeling that day. I will only add that in what I have just written there is too much levity ; in reality my feeling was deeper and more modest. Perhaps even now I am more modest in myself than in my words and deeds—God grant it may be so !

Perhaps I have done amiss in sitting down to write at all. Infinitely more remains hidden within than comes out in words. Your thought, even if it is an evil one, is always deeper while it is in your mind ; it becomes more absurd and dishonourable when it is put into words. Versilov once said to me that the opposite was true only with horrid people, they simply tell lies, it is easy for them ; but I am trying to write the whole truth, and that's fearfully difficult !

2

On that 19th of September I took one other “step.”

For the first time since I arrived I had money in my pocket, for the sixty roubles I had saved up in two years I had given to my mother, as I mentioned before. But, a few days before, I had determined that on the day I received my salary I would make an “experiment” of which I had long been dreaming. The day before I had cut out of the paper an address ; it was an advertisement that on the 19th of September at twelve o'clock in the morning, in such-and-such a street, at number so-and-so, there would be a sale by the local police authority of the effects of Mme. Lebrecht, and that the catalogue, valuation, and property for sale could be inspected on the day of the auction, and so on.

It was just past one. I hurried to the address on foot. I had not taken a cab for more than two years—I had taken a vow not to (or I should never have saved up my sixty roubles). I had never been to an auction, I had never *allowed* myself this indulgence. And though my present step was only an *experiment*

yet I had made up my mind not to take even that step till I had left the grammar school, when I should break off with everything, hide myself in my shell, and become perfectly free. It is true that I was far from being in my shell and far from being free yet, but then I was only taking this step by way of an experiment—simply to look into it, as it were to indulge a fancy, and after that not to recur to it perhaps for a long while, till the time of beginning seriously. For every one else this was only a stupid little auction, but for me it was the first plank in the ship in which a Columbus would set out to discover his America. That was my feeling then.

When I arrived I went into the furthest corner of the yard of the house mentioned in the advertisement, and entered Mme. Lebrecht's flat, which consisted of an entry and four small low-pitched rooms. In the first room there was a crowd of about thirty persons, half of them people who had come to bargain, while the rest, judging from their appearance, were either inquisitive outsiders, or connoisseurs, or representatives of Mme. Lebrecht. There were merchants and Jews gloating over the objects made of gold, and a few people of the well-dressed class. The very faces of some of these gentlemen remain stamped in my memory. In the doorway leading to the room on the right there was placed a table so that it was impossible to pass; on it lay the things catalogued for sale. There was another room on the left, but the door into it was closed, though it was continually being opened a little way, and some one could be seen peeping through the crack, no doubt some one of the numerous family of Mme. Lebrecht, who must have been feeling very much ashamed at the time. At the table between the doors, facing the public, sat the warrant officer, to judge by his badge, presiding over the sale. I found the auction half over; I squeezed my way up to the table as soon as I went in. Some bronze candlesticks were being sold. I began looking at the things.

I looked at the things and wondered what I could buy, and what I could do with bronze candlesticks, and whether my object would be attained, and how the thing would be done, and whether my project would be successful, and whether my project were not childish. All this I wondered as I waited. It was like the sensation one has at the gambling table at the moment before one has put down a card, though one has come to do so, feeling, "if I like I'll put it down, if I don't I'll go

away—I'm free to choose ! ” One's heart does not begin to throb at that point, but there is a faint thrill and flutter in it—a sensation not without charm. But indecision soon begins to weigh painfully upon one : one's eyes grow dizzy, one stretches out one's hand, picks up a card, but mechanically, almost against one's will, as though some one else were directing one's hand. At last one has decided and thrown down the card—then the feeling is quite different—immense. I am not writing about the auction ; I am writing about myself ; who else would feel his heart throbbing at an auction ?

Some were excited, some were waiting in silence, some had bought things and were regretting it. I felt no sympathy with a gentleman who, misunderstanding what was said, bought an electro-plated milk-jug in mistake for a silver one for five roubles instead of two ; in fact it amused me very much. The warrant officer passed rapidly from one class of objects to another : after the candlesticks, displayed earrings, after earrings an embroidered leather cushion, then a money-box—probably for the sake of variety, or to meet the wishes of the purchasers. I could not remain passive even for ten minutes. I went up to the cushion, and afterwards to the cash-box, but at the critical moment my tongue failed me : these objects seemed to me quite out of the question. At last I saw an album in the warrant officer's hand.

“ A family album in real morocco, second-hand, with sketches in water-colour and crayon, in a carved ivory case with silver clasps—priced two roubles ! ”

I went up : it looked an elegant article, but the carving was damaged in one place. I was the only person who went up to look at it, all were silent ; there was no bidding for it. I might have undone the clasps and taken the album out of the case to look at it, but I did not make use of my privilege, and only waved a trembling hand as though to say “ never mind.”

“ Two roubles, five kopecks,” I said. I believe my teeth were chattering again.

The album was knocked down to me. I at once took out the money, paid for it, snatched up the album, and went into a corner of the room. There I took it out of its case, and began looking through it with feverish haste—it was the most trumpery thing possible—a little album of the size of a piece of notepaper, with rubbed gilt edges, exactly like the albums girls used to keep in former days when they left school. There were crayon

and colour sketches of temples on mountain-sides, Cupids, a lake with floating swans ; there were verses :

*On a far journey I am starting,
From Moscow I am departing,
From my dear ones I am parting.
And with post-horses flying South.*

They are enshrined in my memory !

I made up my mind that I had made a mess of it ; if there ever was anything no one could possibly want it was this.

“Never mind,” I decided, “one’s bound to lose the first card ; it’s a good omen, in fact.”

I felt thoroughly light-hearted.

“Ach, I’m too late ; is it yours ? You have bought it ?” I suddenly heard beside me the voice of a well-dressed, presentable-looking gentleman in a blue coat. He had come in late.

“I am too late. Ach, what a pity ! How much was it ?”

“Two roubles, five kopecks.”

“Ach, what a pity ! Would you give it up ?”

“Come outside,” I whispered to him, in a tremor.

We went out on the staircase.

“I’ll let you have it for ten roubles,” I said, feeling a shiver run down my back.

“Ten roubles ! Upon my word !”

“As you like.”

He stared at me open-eyed. I was well dressed, not in the least like a Jew or a second-hand dealer.

“Mercy on us—why it’s a wretched old album, what use is it to anyone ? The case isn’t worth anything certainly. You certainly won’t sell it to anyone.”

“I see you will buy it.”

“But that’s for a special reason. I only found out yesterday. I’m the only one who would. Upon my word, what are you thinking about !”

“I ought to have asked twenty-five roubles, but as there was, after all, a risk you might draw back, I only asked for ten to make sure of it. I won’t take a farthing less.”

I turned and walked away.

“Well, take four roubles,” he said, overtaking me in the yard, “come, five !”

I strode on without speaking.

“ Well, take it then ! ”

He took out ten roubles. I gave him the album.

“ But you must own it’s not honest ! Two roubles—and then ten, eh ? ”

“ Why not honest ? It’s a question of market.”

“ What do you mean by market ? ” He grew angry.

“ When there’s a demand one has a market—if you hadn’t asked for it I shouldn’t have sold it for forty kopecks.”

Though I was serious and didn’t burst out laughing I was laughing inwardly—not from delight—I don’t know why myself, I was almost breathless.

“ Listen,” I muttered, utterly unable to restrain myself, but speaking in a friendly way and feeling quite fond of him. “ Listen, when as a young man the late James Rothschild, the Parisian one, who left seventeen hundred million francs (he nodded), heard of the murder of the Duc de Berri some hours before anybody else he sent the news to the proper quarter, and by that one stroke in an instant made several millions—that’s how people get on ! ”

“ So you’re a Rothschild, are you ? ” he cried as though indignant with me for being such a fool.

I walked quickly out of the house. One step, and I had made seven roubles ninety-five kopecks. It was a senseless step, a piece of child’s play I admit, but it chimed in with my theories, and I could not help being deeply stirred by it. But it is no good describing one’s feelings. My ten roubles were in my waistcoat pocket, I thrust in two fingers to feel it—and walked along without taking my hand out. After walking a hundred yards along the street I took the note out to look at it, I looked at it and felt like kissing it. A carriage rumbled up to the steps of a house. The house porter opened the door and a lady came out to get into the carriage. She was young, handsome and wealthy-looking, gorgeously dressed in silk and velvet, with a train more than two yards long. Suddenly a pretty little portfolio dropped out of her hand and fell on the ground ; she got into the carriage. The footman stooped down to pick the thing up, but I flew up quickly, picked it up and handed it to the lady, taking off my hat. (The hat was a silk one, I was suitably dressed for a young man.) With a very pleasant smile, though with an air of reserve, the lady said to me : “ *Merci, M’sieu !* ” The carriage rolled away. I kissed the ten-rouble note.

That same day I was to go and see Efim Zvyerev, one of my old schoolfellows at the grammar school, who had gone to a special college in Petersburg. He is not worth describing, and I was not on particularly friendly terms with him ; but I looked him up in Petersburg. He might (through various circumstances which again are not worth relating) be able to give me the address of a man called Kraft, whom it was very important for me to see as soon as he returned from Vilna. Efim was expecting him that day or the next, as he had let me know two days before. I had to go to the Petersburg Side, but I did not feel tired.

I found Efim (who was also nineteen) in the yard of his aunt's house, where he was staying for the time. He had just had dinner and was walking about the yard on stilts. He told me at once that Kraft had arrived the day before, and was staying at his old lodgings close by, and that he was anxious to see me as soon as possible, as he had something important to tell me.

"He's going off somewhere again," added Efim.

As in the present circumstances it was of great importance to see Kraft I asked Efim to take me round at once to his lodging, which it appeared was in a back street only a few steps away. But Efim told me that he had met him an hour ago and that he was on his way to Dergatchev's.

"But come along to Dergatchev's. Why do you always cry off ? Are you afraid ? "

Kraft might as a fact stay on at Dergatchev's, and in that case where could I wait for him ? I was not afraid of going to Dergatchev's, but I did not want to go to his house, though Efim had tried to get me there three times already. And on each occasion had asked "Are you afraid ?" with a very nasty smile at my expense. It was not a case of fear I must state at once ; if I was afraid it was of something quite different. This time I made up my mind to go. Dergatchev's, too, was only a few steps away. On the way I asked Efim if he still meant to run away to America.

"Maybe I shall wait a bit," he answered with a faint smile.

I was not particularly fond of him ; in fact I did not like him at all. He had fair hair, and a full face of an excessive fairness, an almost unseemly childish fairness, yet he was taller than I

was, but he would never have been taken for more than seventeen. I had nothing to talk to him about.

"What's going on there? Is there always a crowd?" I asked.

"But why are you always so frightened?" he laughed again.

"Go to hell!" I said, getting angry.

"There won't be a crowd at all. Only friends come, and they're all his own set. Don't worry yourself."

"But what the devil is it to me whether they're his set or not! I'm not one of his set. How can they be sure of me?"

"I am bringing you and that's enough. They've heard of you already. Kraft can answer for you, too."

"I say, will Vassin be there?"

"I don't know."

"If he is, give me a poke and point him out as soon as we go in. As soon as we go in. Do you hear?"

I had heard a good deal about Vassin already, and had long been interested in him.

Dergatchev lived in a little lodge in the courtyard of a wooden house belonging to a merchant's wife, but he occupied the whole of it. There were only three living rooms. All the four windows had the blinds drawn down. He was a mechanical engineer, and did work in Petersburg. I had heard casually that he had got a good private berth in the provinces, and that he was just going away to it.

As soon as we stepped into the tiny entry we heard voices. There seemed to be a heated argument and some one shouted :

"Quae medicamenta non sanant, ferrum sanat, quae ferrum non sanat—ignis sanat!"

I certainly was in some uneasiness. I was, of course, not accustomed to society of any kind. At school I had been on familiar terms with my schoolfellows, but I was scarcely friends with anyone; I made a little corner for myself and lived in it. But this was not what disturbed me. In any case I vowed not to let myself be drawn into argument and to say nothing beyond what was necessary, so that no one could draw any conclusions about me; above all—to avoid argument.

In the room, which was really too small, there were seven men; counting the ladies, ten persons. Dergatchev was five-and-twenty, and was married. His wife had a sister and another female relation, who lived with them. The room was furnished after a fashion, sufficiently though, and was even tidy. There

was a lithographed portrait on the wall, but a very cheap one ; in the corner there was an ikon without a setting, but with a lamp burning before it.

Dergatchev came up to me, shook hands and asked me to sit down.

“ Sit down ; they’re all our own set here.”

“ You’re very welcome,” a rather nice-looking, modestly dressed young woman added immediately, and making me a slight bow she at once went out of the room. This was his wife, and she, too, seemed to have been taking part in the discussion, and went away to nurse the baby. But there were two other ladies left in the room ; one very short girl of about twenty, wearing a black dress, also rather nice-looking, and the other a thin, keen-eyed lady of thirty. They sat listening eagerly, but not taking part in the conversation. All the men were standing except Kraft, Vassin and me. Efim pointed them out to me at once, for I had never seen Kraft before, either. I got up and went up to make their acquaintance. Kraft’s face I shall never forget. There was no particular beauty about it, but a positive excess of mildness and delicacy, though personal dignity was conspicuous in everything about him. He was twenty-six, rather thin, above medium height, fair haired, with an earnest but soft face ; there was a peculiar gentleness about his whole personality. And yet if I were asked I would not have changed my own, possibly very commonplace, countenance for his, which struck me as so attractive. There was something in his face I should not have cared to have in mine, too marked a calm (in a moral sense) and something like a secret, unconscious pride. But I probably could not have actually formed this judgment at the time. It seems so to me now, in the light of later events.

“ I’m very glad you’ve come,” said Kraft. “ I have a letter which concerns you. We’ll stay here a little and then go home.”

Dergatchev was a strong, broad-shouldered, dark-complexioned man of medium height, with a big beard. His eyes showed acuteness, habitual reserve, and a certain incessant watchfulness ; though he was for the most part silent, he evidently controlled the conversation. Vassin’s face did not impress me much, though I had heard of him as extraordinarily intelligent : he had fair hair, large light grey eyes, and a very open face. But at the same time there was something, as it were, too hard in it ; one had a presentiment that he would not be communicative,

but he looked undeniably clever, cleverer than Dergatchev, of a more profound intellect—cleverer than anyone in the room. But perhaps I am exaggerating. Of the other young men I only recall two; one a tall, dark man of twenty-seven, with black whiskers, who talked a great deal, a teacher or something of the sort; the other was a fellow of my own age, with good lines in his face, wearing a Russian tunic without sleeves. He was silent, and listened attentively. He turned out afterwards to be a peasant.

“No, that’s not the way to put it,” the black-whiskered teacher began, obviously continuing the previous discussion. He talked more than anyone in the room.

“I’m not talking of mathematical proofs, but that idea which I am prepared to believe without mathematical proof . . .”

“Wait a bit, Tihomirov,” Dergatchev interrupted loudly, “the new-comers don’t understand. You see,” he suddenly addressed himself to me alone (and I confess if he intended to put me as a novice through an examination or to make me speak, it was adroitly done on his part; I felt it and prepared myself) “it’s all our friend Kraft, who is well known to us all for his character and the solidity of his convictions. From a very ordinary fact he has deduced a very extraordinary conviction that has surprised us all. He has deduced that the Russians are a second-rate people . . .”

“Third-rate,” shouted some one.

“A second-rate people destined to serve as the raw material for a nobler race, and not to play an independent part in the history of humanity. In view of this theory of his, which is perhaps correct, Kraft has come to the conclusion that the activity of every Russian must in the future be paralysed by this idea, that all, so to speak, will fold their hands and . . .”

“Excuse me, Dergatchev, that’s not the way to put it,” Tihomirov interrupted impatiently again (Dergatchev at once gave way), “considering that Kraft has made a serious study of the subject, has made on a physiological basis deductions which he regards as mathematically proved, and has spent perhaps two years on his idea (which I should be prepared a priori to accept with equanimity), considering all this, that is considering Kraft’s excitement and earnestness, the case must be considered as a phenomenon. All this leads up to a question which Kraft cannot understand, and that’s what we must attend to—I mean, Kraft’s not understanding it, for that’s the phenomenon. We

must decide whether this phenomenon belongs to the domain of pathology as a solitary instance, or whether it is an occurrence which may be normally repeated in others ; that's what is of interest for the common cause. I believe Kraft about Russia, and I will even say that I am glad of it, perhaps ; if this idea were assimilated by all it would free many from patriotic prejudice and untie their hands . . . ”

“ I am not influenced by patriotism,” said Kraft, speaking with a certain stiffness. All this debate seemed distasteful to him.

“ Whether patriotism or not we need not consider,” observed Vassin, who had been very silent.

“ But how, tell me, please, could Kraft's deduction weaken the impulse to the cause of humanity,” shouted the teacher. (He was the only one shouting. All the others spoke in a low voice.) “ Let Russia be condemned to second-rateness, but we can still work and not for Russia alone. And, what's more, how can Kraft be a patriot if he has ceased to believe in Russia ? ”

“ Besides being a German,” a voice interrupted again.

“ I am a Russian,” said Kraft.

“ That's a question that has no direct bearing on the subject,” observed Dergatchev to the speaker who had interrupted.

“ Take a wider view of your idea,” cried Tihomirov, heeding nothing. “ If Russia is only the material for nobler races why shouldn't she serve as such material ? It's a sufficiently attractive part for her to play. Why not accept the idea calmly, considering how it enlarges the task ? Humanity is on the eve of its regeneration, which is already beginning. None but the blind deny the task before us. Let Russia alone, if you've lost faith in her, and work for the future, for the future unknown people that will be formed of all humanity without distinction of race. Russia would perish some time, anyway ; even the most gifted peoples exist for fifteen hundred or at the most two thousand years. Isn't it all the same whether it's two thousand or two hundred ? The Romans did not last fifteen hundred years as a vital force, they too have turned into material. They ceased to exist long ago, but they've left an idea, and it has become an element in the future of mankind. How can one tell a man there's nothing to be done ? I can't conceive of a position in which there ever could be nothing to do ! Work for humanity and don't trouble about the rest. There's so much to do that life isn't long enough if you look into it more closely.”

“ One must live in harmony with the laws of nature and

truth," Mme. Dergatchev observed from the doorway. The door was slightly ajar and one could see that she was standing there, listening eagerly, with the baby at her breast which was covered.

Kraft listened with a faint smile and brought out at last with a somewhat harassed face, but with earnest sincerity :

"I don't understand how, if one is under the influence of some over-mastering idea which completely dominates one's mind and one's heart, one can live for something else which is outside that idea."

"But if it is logically, mathematically proved to you that your deduction is erroneous—that your whole idea is erroneous, that you have not the slightest right to exclude yourself from working for the welfare of humanity simply because Russia is predestined to a second-rate part, if it is pointed out to you, that in place of your narrow horizon infinity lies open before you, that instead of your narrow idea of patriotism . . ."

"Ah!" Kraft waved his hand gently, "I've told you there is no question of patriotism."

"There is evidently a misunderstanding," Vassin interposed suddenly, "the mistake arises from the fact that Kraft's conclusion is not a mere logical theory but, so to say, a theory that has been transmuted into a feeling. All natures are not alike; in some men a logical deduction is sometimes transmuted into a very powerful emotion which takes possession of the whole being, and is sometimes very difficult to dislodge or alter. To cure such a man the feeling itself must be changed, which is only possible by replacing it by another, equally powerful one. That's always difficult, and in many cases impossible."

"That's a mistake," roared the argumentative teacher, "a logical proof of itself will dissipate prejudices. A rational conviction will give rise to feeling, too. Thought arises from feeling and dominating a man in its turn formulates new feeling."

"People are very different. Some change their feelings readily, while for others it's hard to do so," responded Vassin, as though disinclined to continue the argument; but I was delighted by his idea.

"That's perfectly true what you say," I said, turning to him, all at once breaking the ice and suddenly beginning to speak; "that to change a feeling one must replace it by another. Four years ago a general in Moscow . . . I didn't know him, you see, but . . . Perhaps he couldn't have inspired respect of himself

. . . And the fact itself may seem irrational but . . . But he had lost a child, that's to say two little girls who had died one after another of scarlatina. And he was utterly crushed, and did nothing but grieve, so that one couldn't bear to go and look at him, and he ended by dying scarcely six months later. It's a fact that he died of it! What could have saved him? The answer is—a feeling of equal strength. One would have had to dig those two little girls out of the grave and give them back to him—that would have been the only thing, I mean in that way. And he died. Yet one might have presented him with excellent reflections: that life is transitory, that all are mortal; one might have produced statistics to show how many children do die of scarlatina . . . he was on the retired list. . . ."

I stopped, out of breath, and looked round.

"That's nothing to do with it," said some one.

"The instance you have quoted, though it's not quite in the same category, is very similar and illustrates the subject," said Vassin, turning to me.

4

Here I must confess why I was so delighted with what Vassin had said about the "idea transmuted into feeling," and at the same time I must confess to a fiendish disgrace. Yes, I was afraid to go to Dergatchev's, though not for the reason Efim imagined. I dreaded going because I had been afraid of them even before I left Moscow. I knew that they (or some of their sort, it's all the same) were great in argument and would perhaps shatter "my idea." I was firmly resolved in myself that I wouldn't give away my idea or say a word to them about it; but they (or again some of their sort) might easily say something to me which would destroy my faith in my "idea," even though I might not utter a syllable about it. There were questions connected with my "idea" which I had not settled, but I did not want anyone to settle them but myself. For the last two years I had even given up reading for fear of meeting with some passage opposed to my "idea" which might shake me. And all at once Vassin had solved the difficulty and reassured me on the most essential point. After all, what was I afraid of and what could they do to me, whatever skill in argument they might have? I perhaps was the only one who understood what Vassin meant by "an idea transformed into an emotion." It's not enough to refute a fine idea, one must replace it by something fine of

equal strength ; or else, refusing absolutely to part with my feeling, in my heart I should refute the refutation, however strong the argument might be, whatever they might say. And what could they give me in place of it ? And therefore I might be braver, I was bound to be more manly. While I was delighted with Vassin, I felt ashamed, and felt myself an insignificant child.

Then there followed fresh ignominy. It was not a contemptible desire to show off my intelligence that made me break the ice and speak, it was an impulse to " throw myself on his neck." The impulse to throw myself on people's necks that they might think well of me and take me to their hearts or something of the sort (pure beastliness, in fact) I look upon as the most abject of my weaknesses, and I suspected it in myself long ago ; in fact, when I was in the corner in which I entrenched myself for so many years, though I don't regret doing so, I knew I ought to behave in company with more austerity. What comforted me after every such ignominious scene was that my " idea " was as great a secret as ever, and that I hadn't given it away. With a sinking at my heart I sometimes imagined that when I did let out my idea to some one I should suddenly have nothing left, that I should become like every one else, and perhaps I should give up the idea ; and so I was on my guard and preserved it, and trembled at the thought of chattering. And now at Dergatchev's, almost at the first contact with anyone, I broke down. I hadn't betrayed anything, of course, but I had chattered unpardonably ; it was ignominious. It is a horrid thing to remember ! No, I must not associate with people. I think so even now. Forty years hence I will speak. My idea demands a corner.

5

As soon as Vassin expressed approval I felt irresistibly impelled to talk.

" I consider that every one has a right to have his own feelings . . . if they are from conviction . . . and that no one should reproach him with them," I went on, addressing Vassin. Though I spoke boldly, it was as though I was not speaking, not my own tongue moving in my mouth.

" Re-all-ly ? " the same voice which had interrupted Dergatchev and shouted at Kraft that he was a German interposed with an ironical drawl. Regarding the speaker as a complete

nonentity, I addressed the teacher as though he had called out to me.

"It's my conviction that I should not dare to judge anyone," I said, quivering, and conscious that I was going to make a fool of myself.

"Why so mysterious?" cried the voice of the nonentity again.

"Every man has his own idea," I went on, gazing persistently at the teacher, who for his part held his tongue and looked at me with a smile.

"Yours is?" cried the nonentity.

"Too long to describe. . . . But part of my idea is that I should be left alone. As long as I've two roubles I want to be independent of every one (don't excite yourself, I know the objection that will be made) and to do nothing—not even to work for that grand future of humanity which Mr. Kraft is invited to work for. Personal freedom, that is, my own, is the first thing, and I don't care about anything else."

My mistake was that I lost my temper.

"In other words you advocate the tranquillity of the well-fed cow?"

"So be it. Cows don't hurt anyone. I owe no one anything. I pay society in the form of taxes that I may not be robbed, killed or assaulted, and no one dare demand anything more. I personally, perhaps, may have other ideas, and if I want to serve humanity I shall, and perhaps ten times as much as those who preach about it; only I want no one to dare to demand it of me, to force me to it like Mr. Kraft. I must be perfectly free not to lift a finger if I like. But to rush and 'fall on everybody's neck' from love to humanity, and dissolve in tears of emotion—is only a fashion. And why should I be bound to love my neighbour, or your future humanity which I shall never see, which will never know anything about me, and which will in its turn disappear and leave no trace (time counts for nothing in this) when the earth in its turn will be changed into an iceberg, and will fly off into the void with an infinite multitude of other similar icebergs; it's the most senseless thing one could possibly imagine. That's your teaching. Tell me why I am bound to be so noble, especially if it all lasts only for a moment?"

"P-pooh!" cried a voice.

I had fired off all this with nervous exasperation, throwing off all restraint. I knew that I was making a fool of myself, but I hurried on, afraid of being interrupted. I felt that my

words were pouring out like water through a sieve, incoherently, nineteen to the dozen, but I hurried on to convince them and get the better of them. It was a matter of such importance to me. I had been preparing for it for three years. But it was remarkable that they were all suddenly silent, they said absolutely nothing, every one was listening. I went on addressing my remarks to the teacher.

“ That’s just it. A very clever man has said that nothing is more difficult than to answer the question ‘ Why we must be honourable.’ You know there are three sorts of scoundrels in the world ; naïve scoundrels, that is, convinced that their villainy is the highest virtue ; scoundrels who are ashamed, that is, ashamed of their own villainy, though they fully intend to persevere with it ; and lastly simple scoundrels, pure-bred scoundrels. For example I had a schoolfellow called Lambert who told me at sixteen that when he came into his fortune it would be his greatest satisfaction to feed on meat and bread while the children of the poor were dying of hunger ; and when they had no fuel for their fires he would buy up a whole woodstack, build it up in a field and set fire to it there, and not give any of it to the poor. Those were his feelings ! Tell me, what am I to say to a pure-blooded scoundrel like that if he asks me why he should be honourable ? Especially now in these times which you have so transformed, for things have never been worse than they are now. Nothing is clear in our society. You deny God, you see, deny heroism. What blind, deaf, dull-witted stagnation of mind can force me to act in one way, if it’s more to my advantage to do the opposite ? You say ‘ a rational attitude to humanity is to your own advantage, too ’ ; but what if I think all these rational considerations irrational, and dislike all these socialist barracks and phalanxes ? What the devil do I care for them or for the future when I shall only live once on earth ! Allow me to judge of my advantage for myself ; it’s more amusing. What does it matter to me what will happen in a thousand years to your humanity if, on your principles, I’m to get for it neither love, nor future life, nor recognition of my heroism ? No, if that’s how it is I’d rather live in the most ignorant way for myself and let them all go to perdition ! ”

“ An excellent sentiment ! ”

“ Though I’m always ready to go with them.”

“ That’s one better ! ”—the same voice again.

The others still remained silent, they all scrutinized me,

staring ; but little by little in different parts of the room there rose a titter, subdued indeed, but they were all laughing at me to my face. Vassin and Kraft were the only ones not laughing, the gentleman with the black whiskers was sniggering too ; he sneered at me persistently and listened.

“ I’m not going to tell you my idea,” I cried, quivering all over, “ nothing would induce me, but I ask you on the other hand, from your point of view—don’t imagine I’m speaking for myself, for I dare say I love humanity a thousand times more than all of you put together ! Tell me, and you must, you are bound now to answer because you are laughing, tell me, what inducement do you hold out to me to follow you ? Tell me, how do you prove to me that you’ll make things better ? How will you deal with my individual protest in your barracks ? I have wanted to meet you, gentlemen, for ever so long. You will have barracks, communistic homes, *stricte necessaire*, atheism, and communistic wives without children—that’s your ideal, I know all about it. And for all this, for this little part of mediocre advantage which your rational system guarantees me, for a bit of bread and a warm corner you take away all my personal liberty ! For instance ; if my wife’s carried off, are you going to take away my personal liberty so that I mayn’t bash my rival’s brains in ? You’ll tell me I shall be more sensible then myself, but what will the wife say to a husband so sensible, if she has the slightest self-respect ? Why it’s unnatural ; you ought to be ashamed ! ”

“ You’re a specialist on the woman question then ? ” the voice of the nonentity pronounced malignantly.

For one instant I had an impulse to fly at him and pommel him with my fists. He was a short fellow with red hair and freckles . . . though what the devil does his appearance matter ?

“ Don’t excite yourself. I’ve never once had relations with a woman,” I rapped out, for the first time addressing him directly.

“ A priceless avowal which might have been made more politely in the presence of ladies.”

But there was a general movement among them ; they were all looking for their hats and taking leave—not on my account, of course, but simply because it was time to break up. But I was crushed with shame at the way they all ignored me. I jumped up, too.

“ Allow me to ask your name. You kept looking at me.” said the teacher, coming up to me with a very nasty smile.

Dolgoruky.”

“Prince Dolgoruky?”

“No, simply Dolgoruky, legally the son of a former serf, Makar Dolgoruky, but the illegitimate son of my former master, Monsieur Versilov. Don’t make a mistake, gentlemen, I don’t tell you this to make you all fall upon my neck and begin howling like calves from sentimentality.”

There was a loud and unceremonious roar of laughter, so much so that the baby, who was asleep in the next room, waked up and began squealing. I trembled with fury. Every one shook hands with Dergatchev and went out without taking the slightest notice of me.

“Come along,” said Kraft, touching me.

I went up to Dergatchev, pressed his hand and shook it vigorously several times.

“You must excuse Kudryumov’s being so rude to you” (Kudryumov was the red-haired man), said Dergatchev.

I followed Kraft out. I was not in the least ashamed.

6

There is of course an immense difference between what I am now and what I was then.

Still “not in the least ashamed” I overtook Vassin on the stairs, leaving Kraft behind as of secondary importance, and with the most natural air as though nothing had happened I asked :

“I believe you know my father, I mean Versilov.

“He’s not exactly an acquaintance of mine,” Vassin answered at once (and without a trace of that insulting refinement of politeness which delicate people adopt when they speak to people who have just disgraced themselves), “but I do know him a little; I have met him and I’ve heard him talk.”

“If you’ve heard him no doubt you do know him, for you are you! What do you think of him? Forgive the abrupt question but I need to know. It’s what *you* would think, just your opinion that I need.”

“You are asking a great deal of me. I believe that man is capable of setting himself tremendous tasks and possibly carrying them through—but without rendering an account of his doings to anyone.”

“That’s true, that’s very true—he’s a very proud man! Is he a sincere man? Tell me, what do you think about his being a Catholic? But I forgot, perhaps you don’t know?”

If I had not been so excited I should not, of course, have fired off such questions so irrelevantly at a man of whom I had heard but whom I had never seen before. I was surprised that Vassin did not seem to notice how rude I was.

"I heard something about it, but I don't know how far it may be true," he answered in the same calm and even tone as before.

"Not a bit! It's false! Do you suppose he can believe in God?"

"He—is a very proud man, as you said just now, and many very proud people like to believe in God, especially those who despise other people. Many strong natures seem to have a sort of natural craving to find some one or something to which they can do homage. Strong natures often find it very difficult to bear the burden of their strength."

"Do you know that must be awfully true," I cried again. "Only I should like to understand . . ."

"The reason is obvious. They turn to God to avoid doing homage to men, of course without recognizing how it comes about in them; to do homage to God is not so humiliating. They become the most fervent of believers—or to be more accurate the most fervently desirous of believing; but they take this desire for belief itself. These are the people who most frequently become disillusioned in the end. As for Monsieur Versilov, I imagine that he has some extremely sincere characteristics. And altogether he interested me."

"Vassin!" I cried, "you rejoice my heart! It's not your intelligence I wonder at; I am astonished that you, a man of such a lofty nature and so far above me, can walk with me and talk to me as simply and courteously as though nothing had happened!"

Vassin smiled.

"You are too flattering, and all that has happened is that you have shown a weakness for abstract conversation. You have probably been through a long period of silence."

"For three years I have been silent; for three years I have been preparing to speak . . . You couldn't of course have thought me a fool, you're so extraordinarily clever, though no one could have behaved more stupidly; but you must have thought me a scoundrel."

"A scoundrel!"

"Yes, certainly! Tell me, don't you secretly despise me for

saying I was Versilov's illegitimate son. . . . Boasting I was the son of a serf ? "

" You worry yourself too much. If you think you did wrong in saying so you've only to avoid saying it again. You have fifty years before you."

" Oh, I know that I ought to be very silent with other people. This throwing oneself on people's necks is the lowest of all vices ; I told them so just now, and here I am doing it to you ! But there is a difference, isn't there ? If you realize that difference, if you are capable of realizing it, then I bless this moment ! "

Vassin smiled again.

" Come and see me if you care to," he said. " I have work now and am busy, but I shall be pleased to see you."

" I thought from your face just now that you were too hard and uncommunicative."

" That may very well be true. I saw something of your sister Lizaveta Makarovna at Luga, last year. . . . Kraft has stopped and I believe is waiting for you. He has to turn here."

I pressed Vassin's hand warmly, and ran up to Kraft, who had walked on ahead all the while I talked to Vassin. We walked in silence to his lodgings. I could not speak to him and did not want to. One of the strongest traits in Kraft's character was delicacy.

CHAPTER IV

1.

KRAFT had been somewhere in the service, and at the same time had been a paid assistant of Andronikov's in the management of the private business which the deceased gentleman had always carried on in addition to his official duties. What mattered to me was, that from his close association with Andronikov, Kraft might well know a great deal of what interested me. But Marie Ivanovna, the wife of Nikolay Semyonovitch, with whom I had boarded so many years while I was at the grammar school in Moscow, was a favourite niece of Andronikov and was brought up by him, and from her I learnt that Kraft had actually been "commissioned" to give me something. I had been expecting him for a whole month.

He lived in a little flat of two rooms quite apart from the rest of the house, and at the moment, having only just returned, he

had no servant. His trunk stood open, not yet unpacked. His belongings lay about on the chairs, and were spread out on the table in front of the sofa : his travelling bag, his cashbox, his revolver and so on. As we went in, Kraft seemed lost in thought, as though he had altogether forgotten me. He had perhaps not noticed that I had not spoken to him on the way. He began looking for something at once, but happening to catch a glimpse of himself in the looking-glass he stood still for a full minute gazing at his own face. Though I noticed this peculiar action, and recalled it all afterwards, I was depressed and disturbed. I was not feeling equal to concentrating my mind. For a moment I had a sudden impulse to go straight away and to give it all up for ever. And after all what did all these things amount to in reality ? Was it not simply an unnecessary worry I had taken upon myself ? I sank into despair at the thought that I was wasting so much energy perhaps on worthless trifles from mere sentimentality, while I had facing me a task that called for all my powers. And meanwhile my incapacity for any real work was clearly obvious from what had happened at Dergatchev's.

"Kraft, shall you go to them again ?" I asked him suddenly.

He turned slowly to me as though hardly understanding me. I sat down on a chair.

"Forgive them," said Kraft suddenly.

I fancied, of course, that this was a sneer, but looking attentively at him, I saw such a strange and even wonderful ingenuousness in his face that I positively wondered at his asking me so earnestly to "forgive" them. He brought up a chair and sat down beside me.

"I know that I am perhaps a medley of all sorts of vanities and nothing more," I began, "but I'm not apologizing."

"And you've no need to apologize to anyone," he said, quietly and earnestly. He talked all the time quietly and very slowly.

"I may be guilty in my own eyes. . . . I like being guilty in my own eyes. . . . Kraft, forgive me for talking nonsense. Tell me, surely you don't belong to that circle ? That's what I wanted to ask."

"They are no sillier than other people and no wiser ; they are mad like every one else. . . ."

"Why, is every one mad ?" I asked, turning towards him with involuntary curiosity.

"All the best people are mad nowadays ; it's the carnival of

mediocrity and ineptitude and nothing else. . . . But it's not worth talking about."

As he talked he looked away into the air and began sentences and broke off without finishing them. I was particularly struck by a note of despondency in his voice.

"Surely Vassin is not one of them, Vassin has a mind, Vassin has a moral idea!" I cried.

"There are no moral ideas now. It suddenly appears that there is not one left and, what's worse, that there never have been any."

"Never have been any in the past?"

"Let us leave that!" he brought out with unmistakable weariness.

I was touched by his sorrowful earnestness. Ashamed of my own egoism I began to drop into his tone.

"The present day," he began after a pause lasting two minutes, looking away into space, "the present day is the golden age of mediocrity and callousness, of a passion for ignorance, idleness, inefficiency, a craving for everything ready-made. No one thinks; it's rare for anyone to work out an idea for himself."

He broke off again and paused for a while; I listened. "Nowadays they are stripping Russia of her forests, and exhausting her natural wealth, turning the country into a waste and making it only fit for the Kalmucks. If a man looks forward and plants a tree every one laughs at him, and tells him he won't live to enjoy it. On the other hand those with aspirations discuss nothing but what will be in a thousand years. The idea that sustained men has utterly gone. It's as though they were all at an hotel and were leaving Russia to-morrow. They are alive if they could only . . ."

"Excuse me, Kraft, you said they worried their heads about what would happen in a thousand years. But you despair about the future of Russia . . . isn't that an anxiety of the same sort?"

"It—it's the most essential question in the world!" he said irritably, and jumped up quickly from his seat.

"Ah, yes! I forgot," he said suddenly in quite a different voice, looking at me in perplexity. "I asked you to come for something special and meanwhile . . . for heaven's sake excuse me."

He seemed suddenly to wake up from a sort of dream, and was almost disconcerted; he took a letter out of a portfolio on the table and gave it to me.

"This is what I have to give you. It's a document of some importance," he began, speaking collectedly and with a businesslike air. Long afterwards, when I recalled it, I was struck by this faculty in him (at an hour such as this was—for him !) of turning such wholehearted attention on another person's affairs and going into them with such firmness and composure.

"It is a letter of Stolbeyev's, that is of the man whose will gave rise to Versilov's lawsuit with the Princes Sokolsky. The case is just being decided in the court, and will certainly be decided in Versilov's favour ; the law is on his side. Meanwhile, in this letter, a private letter written two years ago, the deceased sets forth his real dispositions, or more accurately his desires, and expresses them rather in favour of the Sokolskys than of Versilov. At any rate the points on which the Sokolskys rest their case in contesting the will are materially strengthened by this letter. Versilov's opponents would give a great deal for this letter; though it really has no positive legal value. Alexey Nikanoritch (Andronikov), who managed Versilov's affairs, kept this letter and not long before his death gave it to me, telling me to 'take care of it' ; perhaps he had a presentiment that he was dying and was anxious about his papers. I was unwilling to judge of Alexey Nikanoritch's intentions in the case, and I must confess that at his death I found myself in disagreeable uncertainty what to do with this document, especially as the case was so soon to be concluded. But Marie Ivanovna, in whom Alexey Nikanoritch seems to have put great confidence in his lifetime, helped me out of the difficulty. She wrote to me three weeks ago telling me that I was to give the letter to you, as this would, she *believed* (her own expression) be in accordance with the wishes of the deceased, and I am very glad that I can at last give it to you."

"Tell me," I said, dumbfounded at this new and unexpected information, "what am I to do with this letter now ? How am I to act ?"

"That's for you to decide."

"Impossible ; my hands are tied, you must admit that ! Versilov is so reckoning on this fortune . . . and, you know, he'll be utterly lost without it ; and it suddenly appears that a document like this exists !"

"It only exists here in this room."

"Is that really so ?" I looked at him attentively.

" If you can't decide how to act in this case, what can I advise you ? "

" But I can't give it to the Sokolskys either. I should ruin all Versilov's hopes, and be a traitor to him besides. . . . On the other hand if I give it to Versilov I plunge the innocent into poverty, and I should put Versilov in a hopeless dilemma too ; he would either have to give up the fortune or become a thief."

" You exaggerate the importance of the matter."

" Tell me one thing : is this letter decisive, conclusive ? "

" No, it isn't. I'm not much of a lawyer. A lawyer on the other side would, no doubt, know how to make use of such a document and to turn it to account ; but Alexey Nikanoritch considered positively that if this letter were put forward it would have no great legal value, so that Versilov's case might be won all the same. This letter is more a matter of conscience, so to say...."

" But that's what matters most of all," I interrupted, " just because it would put Versilov in a hopeless dilemma."

" He may on the contrary destroy the document, and so escape all danger."

" Have you any grounds for supposing such a thing of him, Kraft ? That's what I want to know ; that's why I'm here."

" I believe every one would do the same in his place."

" Would you behave so, yourself ? "

" I'm not going to receive a fortune, so I can't tell about myself."

" Very well," I said, putting the letter in my pocket. " The matter's settled for the present. Listen, Kraft. Marie Ivanovna, who has, I assure you, told me a great deal, said to me that you and only you could tell me the truth of what happened at Ems a year and a half ago between Versilov and Mme. Ahmakov. I've been looking forward to seeing you as a sun that would throw light on everything. You won't know my position, Kraft. I beseech you to tell me the whole truth. What I want to know is what kind of man *he* is, and now—now I need to know it more than ever."

" I wonder Marie Ivanovna did not tell you all about it herself ; she might have heard it all from Andronikov, and of course she has heard it and very likely knows more than I do."

" Andronikov was not clear about it himself, so Marie Ivanovna told me. It seems a maze to which no one has the clue. The devil himself would be lost in it. I know that you were at Ems yourself at the time."

"I never knew the whole of it, but what I do know I will willingly tell you if you like, though I doubt whether I shall satisfy you."

2

I won't reproduce his story word for word, but will only give a brief summary of it.

A year and a half before, Versilov (through the old prince) became a constant visitor at the Ahmakovs' (they were all abroad then, at Ems) and made a great impression on the general himself, a man who had during three years of marriage squandered all his wife's large dowry over cards, and as a result of his irregular life had already had a paralytic stroke, though he was not an old man. He had recovered from it before going abroad, and was staying at Ems for the sake of his daughter by his first wife. She was a girl of seventeen, in delicate health—consumptive—and said to be extremely beautiful, but at the same time very fantastical. She had no dowry; but they rested their hopes, as usual, on the old prince. Mme. Ahmakov was said to be a good stepmother, but the girl, for some reason, became particularly attached to Versilov. He was preaching at that time "something impassioned," as Kraft expressed it, some sort of new life; "was in a state of religious fervour of the most exalted kind," in the strange and perhaps ironical phrase of Andronikov, which was repeated to me. But it was noticeable that they all soon began to dislike him. The general was positively afraid of him. Kraft did not altogether deny the rumour that Versilov succeeded in instilling into the invalid husband's mind the suspicion that his wife, Katerina Nikolaevna, was not indifferent to the young Prince Sokolsky (who had left Ems and was at that time in Paris). He did this not directly, but "after his usual fashion"—by hints, inferences, and all sorts of roundabout ways, "at which he is a great master," said Kraft. I may say that Kraft considered him, and preferred to consider him, altogether rather as an impostor and an inveterate intriguer than as a man genuinely possessed by some exalted, or at least original, idea. I knew, apart from Kraft, that Versilov, who had at first had an extraordinary influence on Katerina Nikolaevna, had by degrees come to an open rupture with her. What lay behind all this I could not find out from Kraft, but every one confirmed the story of the mutual hatred that had sprung up between them after their friendship. Then

came a strange circumstance: Katerina Nikolaevna's invalid stepdaughter apparently fell in love with Versilov, or was struck by something in him, or was inflamed by his eloquence or I don't know what; but it is known that at one time Versilov spent almost every day at her side. It ended by the young lady's suddenly announcing to her father that she wanted to marry Versilov. That this actually had happened was confirmed by every one—by Kraft, by Andronikov, and by Marie Ivanovna, and even Tatyana Pavlovna once spoke about it before me. They asserted also that Versilov not only desired it himself but positively insisted on a marriage with this girl, and that these two creatures of such different species, one old and the other young, were in complete agreement about it. But the father was alarmed at the idea. As he became more estranged from Katerina Nikolaevna, whom he had been very fond of, he now began almost to idolize his daughter, especially after his stroke. But the bitterest opposition to the idea of such a marriage came from Katerina Nikolaevna. There followed a great number of secret and extremely unpleasant family wrangles, disputes, mortifying and in fact revolting scenes. At last the father began to give way before the persistence of the love-sick girl who was, as Kraft expressed it, "fanatized" by Versilov. But Katerina Nikolaevna still resisted it with implacable hatred. And it is at this stage that the muddle begins which no one can understand. But this was Kraft's conjecture based on the facts—only a conjecture, however.

He thought Versilov had succeeded, *in his characteristic way*, in subtly suggesting to the young person that the reason Katerina Nikolaevna would not agree was that she was in love with him herself, and had been for a long time past worrying him with her jealousy, pursuing him and intriguing; that she had declared her feeling to him and was now ready to horsewhip him for loving some one else: something of that sort, anyway. Worst of all, that he had "hinted" this to the girl's father, the husband of the "unfaithful" wife, explaining that the prince had only been a passing amusement. The house, of course, began to be a perfect hell. In some versions of the story Katerina Nikolaevna was devoted to her stepdaughter and now was in despair at being calumniated to her, to say nothing of her relations with her invalid husband. And, what is more, there existed another version, which, to my grief, I found Kraft fully believed, and therefore I believed myself (of all this I had heard already).

It was maintained (Andronikov, it was said, had heard it from Katerina Nikolaevna herself) that, on the contrary, Versilov had in the past, before his feeling for the girl, made love to Katerina Nikolaevna ; that though she had been his friend and had been for a time carried away by his religious exaltation, yet she had constantly opposed and mistrusted him, and that she had met Versilov's declaration with deep resentment and had ridiculed him vindictively ; that she had formally dismissed him for having openly suggested that she should become his wife as her husband was expected to have a second attack very shortly. On this theory Katerina Nikolaevna must have felt a peculiar hatred for Versilov when she saw him afterwards so openly trying to win her stepdaughter's hand. Marie Ivanovna, who told me all this in Moscow, believed in both versions—both together, that is ; she maintained that there was nothing inconsistent in all this, that it was something in the style of *la haine dans l'amour*, of the wounded pride of love on both sides, etc. etc.—something, in fact, like a very subtle, intricate romance, quite out of keeping with any serious and common-sense man and, moreover, with an element of nastiness in it. But Marie Ivanovna, in spite of her estimable character, had been from childhood upwards saturated with sentiment, from the novels which she read day and night. The sequel exhibited Versilov's evident baseness, his lying and intriguing, something dark and loathsome in him, the more so as the affair had a tragic ending. The poor infatuated girl poisoned herself, they say, by means of phosphorus matches, though even now I don't know whether to believe that last detail. They did their utmost to hush it up, anyway. The young lady was ill for a fortnight and then died. So the matches remained an open question, but Kraft firmly believed in them. Shortly afterwards the young lady's father died too—it was said from his grief, which brought on a second stroke, though this did not occur till three months later. But after the young lady's funeral the young Prince Sokolsky, who had returned to Ems from Paris, gave Versilov a slap in the face in a public garden, and the latter had not replied with a challenge but had, on the contrary, showed himself next day on the promenade as though nothing had happened. Then every one turned against him, in Petersburg as well. Though Versilov kept up with some acquaintances, they were quite in a different circle. All his aristocratic friends blamed him, though, as a fact, scarcely anyone knew the details ;

they only knew something of the young lady's romantic death and the slap in the face. Only two or three persons knew the story fully, so far as that was possible. The one who had known most of all was the deceased, Andronikov, who had for many years had business relations with the Ahmakovs, and had had to do with Katerina Nikolaevna particularly in one case. But he kept all these secrets even from his own family and had only told part of the story to Kraft and Marie Ivanovna, and that from necessity.

"The chief point is that there is a document in existence," concluded Kraft, "which Mme. Ahmakov is very much afraid of."

And this was what he told me about that. When the old prince, Katerina Nikolaevna's father, was abroad, beginning to recover from his attack, she was so indiscreet as to write to Andronikov in dead secret (Katerina Nikolaevna put implicit faith in him) an extremely compromising letter. During his convalescence the old prince actually did, it was said, display a propensity to waste his money—almost to fling it away, in fact ; he began buying, when he was abroad, quite useless but expensive objects, pictures, vases, making donations and subscriptions of large sums to various institutions out there, and goodness knows what. He almost bought, on the sly, for an immense sum, a ruined and encumbered estate from a fashionable Russian spendthrift ; and, finally, began even dreaming of matrimony. And in view of all this, Katerina Nikolaevna, who had never left her father's side during his illness, wrote to Andronikov, as a "lawyer" and "an old friend," inquiring whether "it would be legally possible to put the old prince under guardianship or to declare him incompetent to manage his own affairs, and, if so, how it could best be done without scandal, that no one might blame her and that her father's feelings might be spared, etc. etc." It was said that Andronikov advised her against this and dissuaded her ; and later on, when the old prince had completely recovered, it was impossible to return to the idea : but the letter remained in Andronikov's hands. And now he had died, and Katerina Nikolaevna had at once remembered the letter : if it turned up among the deceased's papers and fell into the old prince's hands, he would, no doubt, have cast her off for ever, cut her out of his will and not have given her another farthing during his lifetime. The thought that his own daughter did not believe in his sanity,

and even wanted to have him certified as a lunatic would change the lamb into a wild beast. Her husband's gambling habits had left her at his death without a farthing, and she had only her father to look to. She fully hoped to receive from him a second dowry as ample as the first.

Kraft did not quite know what had become of the letter, but observed that Andronikov never tore up papers of consequence, and he was, besides, a man of "broad principles" as well as "broad intelligence." (I was positively surprised at the independence of Kraft's criticism of Andronikov, whom he had loved and respected so much.) But Kraft felt convinced that Versilov had obtained possession of the compromising document through his close relations with Andronikov's widow and daughters; it was known, indeed, that they had at once, of necessity, handed over all the deceased's papers to Versilov. He knew, too, that Katerina Nikolaevna was already aware that the letter was in Versilov's possession and that she was frightened on account of it, imagining that Versilov would take the letter straight to her old father; that on her return from abroad she had searched for the document in Petersburg, had been at the Andronikovs', and was still hunting for it now, so that she must still have some hope that the letter was not in Versilov's hands; and, finally, that she had gone to Moscow simply with the same object, and had entreated Marie Ivanovna to look for it among the papers that had remained with her. She had only recently, since her return to Petersburg, heard of the existence of Marie Ivanovna, and of the footing on which the latter had stood with Andronikov.

"You don't think she found it at Marie Ivanovna's?" I asked. "I have my own ideas."

"If Marie Ivanovna has not told even you about it, probably she hasn't got it."

"Then you suppose the document is in Versilov's hands?"

"Most likely it is. I don't know, though. Anything is possible," he answered with evident weariness.

I gave up questioning him, and indeed there was no object in doing so. All that mattered most had been made clear to me, in spite of all this sordid tangle; all that I feared most was confirmed.

"It's all like a delirious nightmare," I said, deeply dejected, as I took up my hat.

"Is the man so dear to you?" asked Kraft. I read his deep sympathy on his face at that minute.

"I felt I shouldn't learn the whole story from you," said I. "Mme. Ahmakov is the only hope left me. I was resting my hopes on her. Perhaps I shall go to her and perhaps not."

Kraft looked at me with some surprise.

"Good-bye, Kraft," I said. "Why force oneself on people who don't want to see one? Isn't it better to break with everything, eh?"

"And what then?" he asked almost sullenly, keeping his eyes on the ground.

"Retreat within oneself! Break with everything and withdraw within oneself!"

"To America?"

"To America! Within oneself, simply within oneself! That's my whole idea, Kraft!" I said enthusiastically.

He looked at me with some curiosity.

"Have you such a place 'within yourself'?"

"Yes. Good-bye, Kraft; thank you. I am sorry to have troubled you. If I were in your place and had that sort of Russia in my head I'd send them all to hell; I'd say: 'Get out with you; keep your fretting and intriguing to yourselves—it's nothing to do with me.'"

"Stay a little longer," he said suddenly when he was already with me at the front door.

I was a little surprised. I went back and sat down again. Kraft sat opposite. We looked at each other with a sort of smile. I can see it all now. I remember that I felt a sort of wonder at him.

"What I like in you is that you're so—courteous," I said suddenly.

"Yes?"

"I feel that, because I don't often succeed in being courteous myself, though I should like to. And yet perhaps it's better for people to be rude to one; at least they save one from the misfortune of liking them."

"What hour of the day do you like best?" he asked, evidently not listening to me.

"What hour? I don't know. I don't like sunset."

"No?" he brought out with a peculiar curiosity.

"Are you going away again?"

"Yes. I'm going away."

"Soon?"

"Yes."

"Surely you don't want a revolver to get to Vilna ?" I asked, without the faintest hidden meaning in my words—and indeed there was no meaning at all ! I asked the question simply because I happened to glance at the revolver and I was at a loss for something to say.

He turned and looked intently at the revolver.

"No, I take it simply from habit."

"If I had a revolver I should keep it hidden somewhere, locked up. It really is a temptation, you know. I may not believe in an epidemic of suicide, but if it's always catching my eye, there really are moments, you know, when it might tempt one."

"Don't talk about it," he said, and suddenly got up from his chair.

"I wasn't thinking of myself," I said, standing up too. "I'm not going to use it. If you were to give me three lives it wouldn't be enough for me."

"Long life to you," broke from him.

He gave me an absent-minded smile and, strange to say, walked straight into the passage as though to show me out, probably not noticing what he was doing.

"I wish you every sort of success, Kraft," I said, as I went out on to the stairs.

"That's as it may be," he answered firmly.

"Till we meet again."

"That's as it may be, too."

I remember his last glance at me.

3

And this was the man for whom my heart had been beating all those years ! And what had I expected from Kraft, what new information ?

As I came away from Kraft's I felt very hungry. It was evening and I had had no dinner. I went to a little restaurant in Great Prospect that I might not have to spend more than twenty, or at most twenty-five, kopecks—I would not have allowed myself to spend more at that time. I took some soup for myself, and as I ate it I sat looking out of window. There were a great many people in the room, and there was a smell of burnt meat, restaurant napkins, and tobacco. It was nasty. Over my head a dumb nightingale, gloomy and pensive, was

pecking at the bottom of its cage. There was a noise in the adjoining billiard-room, but I sat there and sank into deep thought. The setting sun (why was Kraft surprised at my not liking the sunset ?) aroused in me a new and unexpected sensation quite out of keeping with my surroundings. I was haunted by the soft look in my mother's eyes, her dear eyes which had been watching me so timidly the whole month. Of late I had been very rude at home, to her especially. I had a desire to be rude to Versilov, but not daring, in my contemptible way tormented her instead. I had thoroughly frightened her, in fact ; often she looked at me with such imploring eyes when Andrey Petrovitch came in, afraid of some outburst on my part. It was a very strange thing that, sitting here in the restaurant, I realized for the first time that, while Versilov spoke to me familiarly, she always addressed me deferentially. I had wondered at it before and had not been impressed in her favour by it, but now I realized it particularly, and strange ideas passed one after another through my brain. I sat there a long time, till it got quite dark. I thought about my sister too.

It was a fateful moment for me. At all costs I must decide. Could I be incapable of decision ? What is the difficulty of breaking with them if they don't want me either ? My mother and sister ? But I should not leave them, anyway, however things turned out.

It is true that the entrance of that man into my life, though only for an instant in my early childhood, was the turning-point from which my conscious development began. Had he not met me then, my mind, my way of thinking, my fate, would certainly have been different, even in spite of the character ordained me by destiny, which I could not anyway have escaped.

But it turned out that this man was only a dream, the dream of my childhood. I had invented him myself, and in reality he was a different man who fell far below my imagination. I had come to find a genuine man, not a man like this. And why had I fallen in love with him once and for ever in that brief moment when I saw him as a child ? That "for ever" must vanish. Some time, if I have space for it, I will describe that meeting, the most futile incident leading up to nothing. But I had built it up into a pyramid. I had begun building that pyramid as I lay in my little bed, when, falling asleep, I could dream and weep—what for I cannot tell. Because I had been abandoned ? Because I was tormented ? But I was only

tormented a little, and only for two years at Touchard's, the school into which he thrust me before leaving me for ever. Afterwards no one tormented me ; quite the contrary ; I looked scornfully at my schoolfellows. And I can't endure the self-pity of the forlorn. There is no rôle more revolting than that of the orphan, the illegitimate, the outcast and all such wretched creatures, for whom I never feel any pity when they solemnly parade before the public and begin piteously but insistently whining of how they have been treated. I could beat them all ! Will none of the filthy, conventional herd understand that it would be ten times as creditable to hold their tongues, not to whine and not to *deign* to complain ! And if he does deign he deserves his fate, the bastard. That's my view !

But what is absurd is not that I used to dream of him in my little bed but that, almost forgetting my chief object, I have come here for the sake of him, of that "imagined" man. I have come to help him to stamp out a calumny, to crush his enemies. The document of which Kraft had spoken, that woman's letter to Andronikov about which she was so afraid, which might ruin her and reduce her to poverty, which she supposed to be in Versilov's hands, was not in his possession but in mine, sewn up in my coat pocket ! I had sewn it there myself, and no one in the whole world knew of it. The fact that the romantic Marie Ivanovna, in whose keeping the letter was left "to be preserved," thought fit to give it to me and to no one else was only her own idea and a matter for her to decide, which I am not called upon to explain, though I may discuss it later if it seems appropriate. But, armed with this unexpected weapon, I could not help yielding to the temptation to come to Petersburg. Of course, I proposed to assist this man secretly without display or excitement, without expecting his praise or his embraces. And never, never would I condescend to reproach him for anything. And indeed, was it his fault that I had fallen in love with him and had created a fantastic ideal of him ? Though, indeed, I did not perhaps love him at all ! His original mind, his interesting character, his intrigues and adventures, and what my mother had been to him—all that, it seemed could not keep me. It was enough that my fantastic doll was shattered, and that I could not, perhaps, love him any more. And so what was keeping me ? why was I sticking there ?—that was the question. The upshot of it all was that only I was a fool, no one else.

But, expecting honesty from others, I will be honest myself. I must confess that the letter sewn up in my pocket did not only arouse in me the passionate desire to rush to Versilov's aid. Now it is quite clear to me, and even then I thought of it with a blush. I had visions of a woman—a proud, aristocratic creature—whom I should meet face to face. She would laugh at me, despise me, as though I were a mouse ; she would not even suspect that her future was in my power. This idea intoxicated me even in Moscow, and still more in the train on the way ; I have confessed this already. Yes, I hated that woman, but already I loved her as my victim ; and all this was true, all this was real. But this was childishness which I should not have expected even from anyone like me. I am describing my feelings then, that is, what passed through my mind as I sat in the restaurant under the nightingale and made up my mind to break with them for ever. The memory of my recent meeting with that woman sent a rush of colour to my face. An ignominious meeting ! An ignominious and stupid impression, and—what mattered most—it showed my incapacity for action. It proved—I thought then—that I was not strong enough to withstand the stupidest lure, though I told Kraft myself just now that I had my place “ within myself,” and work of my own, and that if I had three lives they wouldn't be enough for me. I said that proudly. My having abandoned my idea and mixed myself up with Versilov's affairs was to some extent excusable, but that I should run from side to side like a frightened hare and be drawn into every trifle—that, of course, was simply my own folly. What induced me to go to Dergatchev's and to burst out with my imbecilities, though I knew long ago that I am incapable of saying anything cleverly or sensibly, that it is always better for me to be silent ? And some Vassin or other reassures me with the reflection that I've fifty years of life ahead of me and so I've no need to worry. It was a good reply, I admit, and did credit to his unmistakable intelligence ; it was good because it was the simplest, and what is simplest is never understood till the last, when everything that is cleverer or stupider has been tried already. But I knew that answer before Vassin ; I'd had an inkling of that thought more than three years ago ; what's more, my “ idea ” was to some extent included in it. Such were my reflections in the restaurant.

I felt disgusted as I made my way towards Semyonovsky Polk at eight o'clock in the evening, worn out with walking and with

thinking. It was quite dark by then and the weather had changed ; it was dry, but a horrid Petersburg wind had sprung up, blowing keenly and malignantly on my back and whirling up the dust and sand. How many sullen faces of poor people hurrying home to their corners from work and trade ! Every one had his own sullen anxiety in his face, and there was perhaps not one common uniting thought in the crowd ! Kraft was right ; every one was different. I met a little boy, so little that it was strange he could be out alone in the street at that hour ; he seemed to have lost his way. A peasant-woman stopped for a minute to listen to him, but, not understanding what he said, waved her hand and went on, leaving him alone in the darkness. I was going towards him, but he suddenly took fright and ran away.

As I approached the house I made up my mind that I should never go and see Vassin. I had an intense longing as I went up the stairs to find them at home alone, without Versilov, that I might have time before he came in to say something nice to my mother or to my dear sister, to whom I had scarcely said anything particular all that month. It so happened that he was not at home.

4

By the way, as I am bringing on to the scene this "new character" (I am speaking of Versilov), I will introduce briefly a formal account of him, though it is of no significance. I do this to make things more comprehensible for the reader, and because I can't foresee where this account could fit in in the later part of my story.

He studied at the university but went into a cavalry regiment of the guards. He married Mlle. Fanariotov and retired from the army. He went abroad, and on his return lived a life of worldly gaiety in Moscow. On his wife's death he spent some time in the country ; then came the episode with my mother. Then he lived for a long time somewhere in the south. During the war with Europe he served in the army but did not reach the Crimea and was never in action. At the conclusion of the war he left the service and went abroad. He took my mother with him, though he left her at Königsberg. The poor woman used sometimes, shaking her head, to tell with a sort of horror how she had spent six months there with her little girl, not knowing the language, absolutely friendless, and in the end

penniless, as though she were lost in a forest. Then Tatyana Pavlovna came to fetch her and took her back to some place in the Novgorod Province. Then, on the emancipation of the serfs, Versilov became one of the first "mediators," and is said to have performed his duties admirably; but he soon gave this up, and in Petersburg was occupied with the conduct of various private lawsuits. Andronikov always had a high opinion of his capacity; he had a great respect for him, and only said he did not understand his character. Then Versilov gave that up too, and went abroad again—this time for a long period, several years. Then came his close intimacy with old Prince Sokolsky. During this period his financial position underwent two or three radical changes. At one time he fell into complete poverty, then grew wealthy and rose again.

Having brought my story to this point, I am determined to describe my "idea" too. For the first time since its conception I will translate it into words. I am determined to reveal it, so to speak, to the reader, partly for the sake of greater clearness in what I have to explain further. And it is not only confusing for the reader; even I, the author, am beginning to get muddled by the difficulty of explaining each step without explaining what led up to it and induced me to take it. By keeping up this "attitude of silence" I have clumsily descended to one of those "literary graces" which I have ridiculed above. Before entering upon my Petersburg romance with all my ignominious adventures in it, I find this preface is necessary. But I was not tempted to silence for the sake of literary "grace" but was forced to it by the nature of the case, that is, the difficulty of the case; even now, when it is all over, I find it very difficult to put this idea into words. Besides, I must describe it in its aspect at that time, that is, the form it took and the way I looked at it, not now, but then, and that is a fresh difficulty. To describe some things is almost impossible. The ideas that are the simplest and the clearest are the most difficult to understand. If before the discovery of America Columbus had begun telling his idea to other people, I am convinced that for a very long time people would not have understood him. And indeed they did not understand him. I don't mean to compare myself with Columbus, and if anyone imagines that I do he ought to be ashamed of himself, that's all.

CHAPTER V

1

My "idea" is—to become a Rothschild. I invite the reader to keep calm and not to excite himself.

I repeat it. My "idea" is to become a Rothschild, to become as rich as Rothschild, not simply rich, but as rich as Rothschild. What objects I have in view, what for, and why—all that shall come later. First I will simply show that the attainment of my object is a mathematical certainty.

It is a very simple matter ; the whole secret lies in two words : *obstinacy* and *perseverance*.

"We have heard that ; it's nothing new," people will tell me. Every "*vater*," in Germany repeats this to his children, and meanwhile your Rothschild (James Rothschild the Parisian, is the one I mean) is unique while there are millions of such "*vaters*."

I should answer :

"You assert that you've heard it, but you've heard nothing. It's true that you're right about one thing. When I said that this was 'very simple,' I forgot to add that it is most difficult. All the religions and the moralities of the world amount to one thing : 'Love virtue and avoid vice.' One would think nothing could be simpler. But just try doing something virtuous and giving up any one of your vices ; just try it. It's the same with this.

"That's why your innumerable German '*vaters*' may, for ages past reckoning, have repeated those two wonderful words which contain the whole secret, and, meanwhile, Rothschild remains unique. It shows it's the same but not the same, and these '*vaters*' don't repeat the same idea.

"No doubt they too have heard of obstinacy and perseverance, but to attain my object what I need is not these German '*vaters*' obstinacy or these '*vaters*' perseverance."

"The mere fact that he is a '*vater*'—I don't mean only the Germans—that he has a family, that he is living like other people, has expenses like other people, has obligations like other people, means that he can't become a Rothschild, but must remain an average man. I understand quite clearly that in

becoming a Rothschild, or merely desiring to become one, not in the German '*vaters*' way but seriously, I must at the same time cut myself off from society."

Some years ago I read in the newspaper that on one of the steamers on the Volga there died a beggar who went about begging in rags and was known to every one. On his death they found sewn up in his shirt three thousand roubles in notes. The other day I read of another beggar of the "respectable" sort, who used to go about the restaurants holding out his hand. He was arrested and there was found on him five thousand roubles. Two conclusions follow directly from this. The first, that *obstinacy* in saving even the smallest coin will produce enormous results in the long run (time is of no account in this), and secondly that the most unskilful form of accumulation if only *persevering* is mathematically certain of success.

Meanwhile there are perhaps a good number of respectable, clever, obstinate people who cannot save either three or five thousand, however much they struggle, though they would be awfully glad to have such a sum. Why is that? The answer is clear: it is because not one of them, in spite of all their wishing it, *desires* it to such a degree that, for instance, if he is not able to save by other means, he is ready to become a beggar, and so persistent that after becoming a beggar, he will not waste the first farthing he is given on an extra crust of bread for himself or his family. With this system of saving, that is in beggary, one must live on bread and salt and nothing more, to save up such sums; at least, so I imagine. That is no doubt what the two beggars I have mentioned above did do; they must have eaten nothing but bread and have lived almost in the open air. There is no doubt that they had no intention of becoming Rothschilds; they were simply Harpagons or Ilyushkins in their purest form, nothing more; but, when there is intelligent accumulation in quite a different form with the object of becoming a Rothschild, no less strength of will is needed than in the case of those two beggars. The German "*vater*" does not show such strength of will. There are many kinds of strength in the world, especially of strength of will and of desire. There is the temperature of boiling water and there is the temperature of molten iron.

One wants here the same thing as in a monastery, the same heroic asceticism. Feeling is wanted, not only idea. What for? Why? Is it moral and not monstrous to wear sackcloth

and eat black bread all one's life to heap up filthy lucre ? These questions I will consider later. Now I am discussing only the possibility of attaining the object. When I thought of my "idea" and it was forged in white heat, I began asking myself—am I capable of asceticism ? With this object, for the whole of the first month I took bread and water, not more than two and a half pounds of black bread a day. To do this I was obliged to deceive Nikolay Semyonovitch who was clever, and Marie Ivanovna who was anxious for my welfare. Though I wounded her and somewhat surprised Nikolay Semyonovitch who was a man of great delicacy, I insisted on having my dinner brought to my room. There I simply got rid of it. I poured the soup out of window on to the nettles or elsewhere, the meat I either flung out of window to a dog, or wrapping it up in paper put it in my pocket and threw it away after, and so on. As the bread given me for dinner was much less than two and a half pounds I bought bread on the sly. I stood this for a month perhaps, only upsetting my stomach a little, but the next month I added soup to the bread and drank a glass of tea morning and evening, and I assure you I passed a year like that in perfect health and content, as well as in a moral ecstasy and perpetual secret delight. Far from regretting the dainties I missed, I was overjoyed. At the end of the year, having convinced myself I was capable of standing any fast, however severe, I began eating as they did, and went back to dine with them. Not satisfied with this experiment I made a second ; apart from the sum paid to Nikolay Semyonovitch for my board I was allowed five roubles a month for pocket money. I resolved to spend only half. This was a very great trial, but after at most two years I had in my pocket by the time I went to Petersburg seventy roubles saved entirely in this way, besides other money. The result of these two experiments was of vast importance to me : I had learnt positively that I could so will a thing as to attain my objects, and that I repeat is the essence of " my idea " —the rest is all nonsense.

2

Let us, however, look into the nonsense too.

I have described my two experiments. In Petersburg, as the reader knows, I made a third. I went to the auction and at one stroke made a profit of seven roubles ninety-five kopecks. This of course was not a real experiment, it was only by way of

sport and diversion. I simply wanted to filch a moment from the future, and to test how I should go and behave. I had decided even at the very first, in Moscow, to put off really beginning till I was perfectly free. I fully realized that I must, for instance, finish my work at school. (The university, as the reader knows already, I sacrificed.) There is no disputing that I went to Petersburg with concealed anger in my heart. No sooner had I left the grammar school and become free for the first time, than I suddenly saw that Versilov's affairs would distract me from beginning my enterprise for an indefinite period. But though I was angry I went to Petersburg feeling perfectly serene about my object.

It is true I knew nothing of practical life ; but I had been thinking about it for three years and could have no doubt about it. I had pictured a thousand times over how I should begin. I should suddenly find myself, as though dropped from the clouds, in one of our two capitals (I pitched on Petersburg or Moscow for my beginning, and by choice Petersburg, to which I gave the preference through certain considerations), perfectly free, not dependent on anyone, in good health, and with a hundred roubles hidden in my pocket, as the capital for my first investment. Without a hundred roubles it would be impossible to begin, as, without it, even the earliest period of success would be too remote. Apart from my hundred roubles I should have, as the reader knows already, courage, obstinacy, perseverance, absolute isolation and secrecy. Isolation was the principal thing. I greatly disliked the idea of any connection or association with others until the last moment. Speaking generally I proposed beginning my enterprise alone, that was a *sine qua non*. People weigh upon me, and with them I should have been uneasy, and uneasiness would have hindered my success. Generally speaking, all my life up to now, in all my dreams of how I would behave with people, I always imagined myself being very clever ; it was very different in reality—I was always very stupid ; and I confess sincerely, with indignation, I always gave myself away and was flustered, and so I resolved to cut people off altogether. I should gain by it independence, tranquillity of mind and clearness of motive.

In spite of the terrible prices in Petersburg I determined once for all that I should never spend more than fifteen kopecks on food, and I knew I should keep my word. This question of food I had thought over minutely for a long time past. I

resolved, for instance, sometimes to eat nothing but bread and salt for two days together, and to spend on the third day what I had saved on those two days. I fancied that this would be better for my health than a perpetual uniform fast on a minimum of fifteen kopecks. Then I needed a corner, literally a "corner," solely to sleep the night in and to have a refuge in very bad weather. I proposed living in the street, and, if necessary, I was ready to sleep in one of the night refuges where they give you a piece of bread and a glass of tea as well as a night's lodging. Oh, I should be quite capable of hiding my money so that it should not be stolen in the "corner," or in the refuge, and should not even be suspected, I'll answer for that !

"Steal from me ? Why, I'm afraid of stealing myself !" I once heard a passer-by in the street say gaily. Of course I only apply to myself the caution and smartness of it, I don't intend to steal. What is more, while I was in Moscow, perhaps from the very first day of my "idea," I resolved that I would not be a pawnbroker or usurer either ; there are Jews for that job, and such Russians as have neither intelligence nor character. Pawnbroking and usury are for the commonplace.

As for clothes, I resolved to have two suits, one for every day and one for best. When once I had got them I felt sure I should wear them a long time. I purposely trained myself to wear a suit for two and a half years, and in fact I discovered a secret : for clothes always to look new and not to get shabby they should be brushed as often as possible, five or six times a day. Brushing does not hurt the cloth. I speak from knowledge. What does hurt it is dust and dirt. Dust is the same thing as stones if you look at it through the microscope, and, however hard a brush is, it is almost the same as fur. I trained myself to wear my boots evenly. The secret lies in putting down the whole sole at once, and avoiding treading on the side. One can train oneself to this in a fortnight, after that the habit is unconscious. In this way boots last on an average a third as long again. That is the experience of two years.

Then followed my activity itself.

I started with the hypothesis that I had a hundred roubles. In Petersburg there are so many auction sales, petty hucksters' booths and people who want things, that it would be impossible not to sell anything one bought for a little more. Over the album I had made seven roubles ninety-five kopecks profit on two roubles five kopecks of capital invested. This immense

profit was made without any risk : I could see from his eyes that the purchaser would not back out. Of course I know quite well that this was only a chance ; but it is just such chances I am on the look-out for, that is why I have made up my mind to live in the street. Well, granted that such a chance is unusual, no matter ; my first principle will be to risk nothing, and the second to make every day more than the minimum spent on my subsistence, that the process of accumulation may not be interrupted for a single day.

I shall be told that "all this is a dream, you don't know the streets, and you'll be taken in at the first step." But I have will and character, and the science of the streets is a science like any other : persistence, attention and capacity can conquer it. In the grammar school right up to the seventh form I was one of the first ; I was very good at mathematics. Why, can one possibly exaggerate the value of experience and knowledge of the streets to such a fantastic pitch as to predict my failure for certain ? That is only what people say who have never made an experiment in anything, have never begun any sort of life, but have grown stiff in second-hand stagnation. "One man breaks his nose, so another must break his." No, I won't break mine. I have character and if I pay attention I can learn anything. But is it possible to imagine that with constant persistence, with incessant vigilance, and continual calculation and reflection, with perpetual activity and alertness one could fail to find out how to make twenty kopecks to spare every day ? Above all I resolved not to struggle for the maximum profit, but always to keep calm. As time went on after heaping up one or two thousand I should, of course, naturally rise above second-hand dealing and street trading. I know, of course, far too little as yet about the stock exchange, about shares, banking and all that sort of thing. But to make up for that I know, as I know I have five fingers on my hand, that I should learn all the stock exchange and banking business as well as anyone else, and that the subject would turn out to be perfectly simple, because one is brought to it by practice. What need is there of the wisdom of Solomon so long as one has character ; efficiency, skill and knowledge come of themselves. If only one does not leave off "willing."

The great thing is to avoid risks, and that can only be done if one has character. Not long ago in Petersburg I had before me a subscription list of shares in some railway investments ; those who succeeded in getting shares made a lot of money.

For some time the shares went up and up. Well, if one day some one who had not succeeded in getting a share, or was greedy for more, had offered to buy mine at a premium of so much per cent., I should certainly have sold it. People would have laughed at me, of course, and have said that if I had waited I should have made ten times as much. Quite so, but my premium is safer, for it's a bird in the hand while yours is on the bush. I shall be told that one can't make much like that ; excuse me, that's your mistake, the mistake of all our Kokorevs, Polyakovs, and Gubonins. Let me tell you the truth ; perseverance and persistence in money making and still more in saving is much more effective than these cent. per cent. profits.

Not long before the French Revolution there was a man called Law in Paris who invented of himself a scheme what was theoretically magnificent but which came utterly to grief in practice afterwards. All Paris was in excitement. Law's shares were bought up at once before allotment. Money from all parts of Paris poured as from a sack into the house where the shares were subscribed. But the house was not enough at last, the public thronged the street, people of all callings, all classes, all ages : bourgeois, noblemen, their children, countesses, marquises, prostitutes, were all struggling in one infuriated, half-crazy, rabid mob. Rank, the prejudices of birth and pride, even honour and good name were all trampled in the same mire ; all, even women, were ready to sacrifice anyone to gain a few shares. The list at last was passed down into the streets, but there was nothing to write on. Then it was suggested to a hunchback that he should lend his back for the time as a table on which people could sign their names for shares. The hunchback agreed—one can fancy at what a price. Some time (a very short time) after, they were all bankrupt, the whole thing went smash, the whole idea was exploded and the shares were worth nothing. Who got the best of it ? Why, the hunchback, because he did not take shares but louis-d'or in cash. Well, I am that hunchback ! I had strength of will enough not to eat, and to save seventy-two roubles out of my kopecks ; I shall have strength enough to restrain myself and prefer a safe profit to a large one, even when every one around me is carried away by a fever of excitement. I am trivial only about trifles, not in what is important. I have often lacked fortitude for enduring little things ever since the inception of my idea, but for enduring big things I shall always have enough. When in the morning my mother gave me cold coffee before I

set out to work, I was angry and rude to her, and yet I was the same person who had lived a whole month on bread and water.

In short not to make money, not to learn how to make money, would be unnatural. It would be unnatural, too, in spite of incessant and regular saving, unflagging care and mental sobriety, self-control, economy, and growing energy—it would be unnatural, I repeat, to fail to become a millionaire. How did the beggar make his money if not by fanatical determination and perseverance? Am I inferior to a beggar? "And after all, supposing I don't arrive at anything, suppose my calculation is incorrect, suppose I fail and come to grief; no matter, I shall go on, I shall go on, because I want to." That is what I said in Moscow.

I shall be told that there is no "idea" in this, absolutely nothing new. But I say, and for the last time, that there are an immense number of ideas in it, and a vast amount that is new.

Oh, I foresaw how trivial all objections would be, and that I should be as trivial myself in expounding my "idea": why, what have I said after all? I haven't told a hundredth part of it. I feel that it is trivial, superficial, crude, and, somehow, too young for my age.

3

I've still to answer the questions, "What for?" and "Why?" "Whether it's moral," and all the rest of it. I've undertaken to answer them.

I am sad at disappointing the reader straight off, sad and glad too. Let him know that in my idea there is absolutely no feeling of "revenge," nothing "Byronic"—no curses, no lamentations over my orphaned state, no tears over my illegitimacy, nothing, nothing of the sort. In fact, if a romantic lady should chance to come across my autobiography she would certainly turn up her nose. The whole object of my "idea" is—
isolation. But one can arrive at isolation without straining to become a Rothschild. What has Rothschild got to do with it?

Why, this. That besides isolation I want power.

Let me tell the reader, he will perhaps be horrified at the candour of my confession, and in the simplicity of his heart will wonder how the author could help blushing: but my answer is that I'm not writing for publication, and I may not have a reader for ten years, and by that time everything will be so thoroughly past, settled and defined that there will be no need

to blush. And so, if I sometimes in my autobiography appeal to my reader it is simply a form of expression. My reader is an imaginary figure.

No, it was not being illegitimate, with which I was so taunted at Touchard's, not my sorrowful childhood, it was not revenge, nor the desire to protest, that was at the bottom of my idea ; my character alone was responsible for everything. At twelve years old, I believe, that is almost at the dawn of real consciousness, I began to dislike my fellow-creatures. It was not that I disliked them exactly, but that their presence weighed upon me. I was sometimes in my moments of purest sincerity quite sad that I never could express everything even to my nearest and dearest, that is, I could but will not ; for some reason I restrain myself, so that I'm mistrustful, sullen and reserved. Again, I have noticed one characteristic in myself almost from childhood, that I am too ready to find fault, and given to blaming others. But this impulse was often followed at once by another which was very irksome to me : I would ask myself whether it were not my fault rather than theirs. And how often I blamed myself for nothing ! To avoid such doubts I naturally sought solitude. Besides, I found nothing in the company of others, however much I tried, and I did try. All the boys of my own age anyway, all my schoolfellows, all, every one of them, turned out to be inferior to me in their ideas. I don't recall one single exception.

Yes, I am a gloomy person ; I'm always shutting myself up. I often love to walk out of a room full of people. I may perhaps do people a kindness, but often I cannot see the slightest reason for doing them a kindness. People are not such splendid creatures that they are worth taking much trouble about. Why can't they approach me openly and directly, why must I always be forced to make the first overtures ?

That is the question I asked myself. I am a grateful creature, and have shown it by a hundred imbecilities. If some one were frank with me, I should instantly respond with frankness and begin to love them at once. And so I have done, but they have all deceived me promptly, and have withdrawn from me with a sneer. The most candid of them all was Lambert, who beat me so much as a child, but he was only an open brute and scoundrel. And even his openness was only stupidity. Such was my state of mind when I came to Petersburg.

When I came out from Dergatchev's (and goodness only

knows what made me go to him) I had gone up to Vassin, and in a rush of enthusiasm I had begun singing his praises. And that very evening I felt that I liked him much less. Why? Just because by my praise of him I had demeaned myself before him. Yet one might have thought it would have been the other way: a man just and generous enough to give another his due, even to his own detriment, ought to stand higher in personal dignity than anyone. And though I quite understood this, I did like Vassin less, much less in fact. I purposely choose an example with which the reader is familiar. I even thought of Kraft with a bitter, sickly feeling, because he had led me into the passage, and this feeling lasted till the day when Kraft's state of mind at the time was revealed, and it was impossible to be angry with him. From the time when I was in the-lowest class in the grammar-school, as soon as any of my comrades excelled me in school work, or witty answers or physical strength, I immediately gave up talking or having anything to do with them. Not that I disliked them or wished them not to succeed; I simply turned away from them because such was my character.

Yes, I thirsted for power, I've thirsted for it all my life, power and solitude. I dreamed of it at an age when every one would have laughed at me to my face if they could have guessed what was in my head. That was why I so liked secrecy. And indeed all my energy went into dreams, so much so that I had no time to talk. This led to my being unsociable, and my absent-mindedness led people to more unpleasant conclusions about me, but my rosy cheeks belied their suspicions.

I was particularly happy when, covering myself up in bed at night, I began in complete solitude, with no stir or sound of other people round me, to re-create life on a different plan. I was most desperately dreamy up to the time of the "idea," when all my dreams became rational instead of foolish, and passed from the fantastic realms of romance to the reasonable world of reality.

Everything was concentrated into one object. Not that they were so very stupid before, although there were masses and masses of them. But I had favourites . . . there is no need to bring them in here, however.

Power! I am convinced that very many people would think it very funny if they knew that such a "pitiful" creature was struggling for power. But I shall surprise them even more: perhaps from my very first dreams that is, almost from my

earliest childhood, I could never imagine myself except in the foremost place, always and in every situation in life. I will add a strange confession : it is the same perhaps to this day. At the same time, let me observe that I am not apologizing for it.

That is the point of my idea, that is the force of it, that money is the one means by which the humblest nonentity may rise to the *foremost place*. I may not be a nonentity, but I know from the looking-glass that my exterior does not do me justice, for my face is commonplace. But if I were as rich as Rothschild, who would find fault with my face ? And wouldn't thousands of women be ready to fly to me with all their charms if I whistled to them ? I am sure that they would honestly consider me good-looking. Suppose I am clever. But were I as wise as Solomon some one would be found wiser still, and I should be done for. But if I were a Rothschild what would that wise man be beside me ? Why, they would not let him say a word beside me ! I may be witty, but with Talleyrand or Piron I'm thrown into the shade ; but if I were Rothschild, where would Piron be, and where Talleyrand even, perhaps ? Money is, of course, despotic power, and at the same time it is the greatest leveller, and that is its chief power. Money levels all inequality. I settled all that in Moscow.

You will see, of course, in this idea nothing but insolence, violence, the triumph of the nonentity over the talented. I admit that it is an impudent idea (and for that reason a sweet one). But let it pass : you imagine that I desire power to be able to crush, to avenge myself. That is just the point, that that is how the commonplace would behave. What is more, I'm convinced that thousands of the wise and talented who are so exalted, if the Rothschilds' millions suddenly fell to their lot could not resist behaving like the most vulgar and commonplace, and would be more oppressive than any. My idea is quite different. I'm not afraid of money. It won't crush me and it won't make me crush others.

What I want isn't money, or rather money is not necessary to me, nor power either. I only want what is obtained by power, and cannot be obtained without it ; that is, the calm and solitary consciousness of strength ! That is the fullest definition of liberty for which the whole world is struggling ! Liberty ! At last I have written that grand word. . . . Yes, the solitary consciousness of strength is splendid and alluring.

I have strength and I am serene. With the thunderbolts in his hands Jove is serene ; are his thunders often heard ? The fool fancies that he is asleep. But put a literary man or a peasant-woman in Jove's place, and the thunder would never cease !

If I only have power, I argued, I should have no need to use it. I assure you that of my own free will I should take the lowest seat everywhere. If I were a Rothschild, I would go about in an old overcoat with an umbrella. What should I care if I were jostled in the crowd, if I had to skip through the mud to avoid being run over ? The consciousness that I was myself, a Rothschild, would even amuse me at the moment. I should know I could have a dinner better than anyone, that I could have the best cook in the world, it would be enough for me to know it. I would eat a piece of bread and ham and be satisfied with the consciousness of it. I think so even now.

I shouldn't run after the aristocracy, but they would run after me. I shouldn't pursue women, but they would fly to me like the wind, offering me all that women can offer. "The vulgar" run after money, but the intelligent are attracted by curiosity to the strange, proud and reserved being, indifferent to everything. I would be kind, and would give them money perhaps, but I would take nothing from them. Curiosity arouses passion, perhaps I may inspire passion. They will take nothing away with them I assure you, except perhaps presents that will make me twice as interesting to them.

*. . . to me enough
The consciousness of this.*

It is strange, but true, that I have been fascinated by this picture since I was seventeen.

I don't want to oppress or torment anyone and I won't, but I know that if I did want to ruin some man, some enemy of mine, no one could prevent me, and every one would serve me, and that would be enough again. I would not revenge myself on anyone. I could never understand how James Rothschild could consent to become a Baron ! Why, for what reason, when he was already more exalted than anyone in the world. "Oh, let that insolent general insult me at the station where we are both waiting for our horses ! If he knew who I was he would run himself to harness the horses and would hasten to assist me into my modest vehicle ! They say that some foreign count or baron at a Vienna railway station put an Austrian banker's

slippers on for him in public ; and the latter was so vulgar as to allow him to do it. Oh, may that terrible beauty (yes, terrible, there are such !), that daughter of that luxurious and aristocratic lady meeting me by chance on a steamer or somewhere, glance askance at me and turn up her nose, wondering contemptuously how that humble, unpresentable man with a book or paper in his hand could dare to be in a front seat beside her ! If only she knew who was sitting beside her ! And she will find out, she will, and will come to sit beside me of her own accord, humble, timid, ingratiating, seeking my glance, radiant at my smile." . . . I purposely introduce these early day-dreams to express what was in my mind. But the picture is pale, and perhaps trivial. Only reality will justify everything.

I shall be told that such a life would be stupid : why not have a mansion, keep open house, gather society round you, why not have influence, why not marry ? But what would Rothschild be then ? He would become like every one else. All the charm of the "idea" would disappear, all its moral force. When I was quite a child I learnt Pushkin's monologue of the "Miserly Knight." Pushkin has written nothing finer in conception than that ! I have the same ideas now.

" But yours is too low an ideal," I shall be told with contempt. " Money, wealth. Very different from the common weal, from self-sacrifice for humanity."

But how can anyone tell how I should use my wealth ? In what way is it immoral, in what way is it degrading, that these millions should pass out of dirty, evil, Jewish hands into the hands of a sober and resolute ascetic with a keen outlook upon life ? All these dreams of the future, all these conjectures, seem like a romance now, and perhaps I am wasting time in recording them. I might have kept them to myself. I know, too, that these lines will very likely be read by no one, but if anyone were to read them, would he believe that I should be unable to stand the test of the Rothschild millions ? Not because they would crush me, quite the contrary. More than once in my dreams I have anticipated that moment in the future, when my consciousness will be satiated, and power will not seem enough for me. Then, not from ennui, not from aimless weariness, but because I have a boundless desire for what is great, I shall give all my millions away, let society distribute all my wealth, and I—I will mix with nothingness again ! Maybe I will turn into a beggar like the one who died

on the steamer, with the only difference that they wouldn't find money sewn up in my shirt. The mere consciousness that I had had millions in my hands and had flung them away into the dirt like trash would sustain me in my solitude. I am ready to think the same even now. Yes, my "idea" is a fortress in which I can always, at every turn, take refuge from every one, even if I were a beggar dying on a steamer. It is my poem! And let me tell you I must have the *whole* of my vicious will, simply to prove *to myself* that I can renounce it.

No doubt I shall be told that this is all romance, and that if I got my millions I should not give them up and become a beggar. Perhaps I should not. I have simply sketched the ideal in my mind.

But I will add seriously that if I did succeed in piling up as much money as Rothschild, that it really might end in my giving it all up to the public (though it would be difficult to do so before I reached that amount). And I shouldn't give away half because that would be simply vulgar: I should be only half as rich, that would be all. I should give away all, all to the last farthing, for on becoming a beggar I should become twice as rich as Rothschild! If other people don't understand this it's not my fault; I'm not going to explain it.

"The fanaticism, the romanticism of insignificance and impotence!" people will pronounce, "the triumph of commonplaceness and mediocrity!" Yes, I admit that it is in a way the triumph of commonplaceness and mediocrity, but surely not of impotence. I used to be awfully fond of imagining just such a creature, commonplace and mediocre, facing the world and saying to it with a smile, "You are Galileos, and Copernicuses, Charlemagnes and Napoleons, you are Pushkins and Shakespeares, you are field-marshals and generals, and I am incompetence and illegitimacy, and yet I am higher than all of you, because you bow down to it yourself." I admit that I have pushed this fancy to such extremes that I have struck out even my education. It seemed to me more picturesque if the man were sordidly ignorant. This exaggerated dream had a positive influence at the time on my success in the seventh form of the grammar-school. I gave up working simply from fanaticism, feeling that lack of education would add a charm to my ideal. Now I've changed my views on that point; education does not detract from it.

Gentlemen, can it be that even the smallest independence of

mind is so distasteful to you ? Blessed he who has an ideal of beauty, even though it be a mistaken one ! But I believe in mine. It is only that I've explained it clumsily, crudely. In ten years, of course, I should explain it better, and I treasure that in my memory.

4

I've finished with my idea. If my account of it has been commonplace and superficial it is I that am to blame and not the idea. I have already pointed out that the simplest ideas are always the most difficult to understand.

Now I will add that they are also the most difficult to explain ; moreover, I have described my "idea" in its earliest phase. The converse is the rule with ideas : commonplace and shallow ideas are extraordinarily quickly understood, and are invariably understood by the crowd, by the whole street. What is more, they are regarded as very great, and as the ideas of genius, but only for the day of their appearance. The cheap never wears. For a thing to be quickly understood is only a sign of its commonplaceness. Bismarck's idea was received as a stroke of genius instantly, and Bismarck himself was looked on as a genius, but the very rapidity of its reception was suspicious. Wait for ten years, and then we shall see what remains of the idea and of Bismarck himself. I introduce this extremely irrelevant observation, of course, not for the sake of comparison, but also for the sake of remembering it. (An explanation for the too unmannerly reader.)

And now I will tell two anecdotes to wind up my account of the "idea," that it may not hinder my story again.

In July, two months before I came to Petersburg, when my time was all my own, Marie Ivanovna asked me to go to see an old maiden lady who was staying in the Troitsky suburb to take her a message of no interest for my story. Returning the same day, I noticed in the railway carriage an unattractive-looking young man, not very poorly though grubbily dressed, with a pimply face and a muddy dark complexion. He distinguished himself by getting out at every station, big and little, to have a drink. Towards the end of the journey he was surrounded by a merry throng of very low companions. One merchant, also a little drunk, was particularly delighted at the young man's power of drinking incessantly without becoming

drunk. Another person, who was awfully pleased with him, was a very stupid young fellow who talked a great deal. He was wearing European dress and smelt most unsavoury—he was a footman as I found out afterwards; this fellow got quite friendly with the young man who was drinking, and, every time the train stopped, roused him with the invitation: "It's time for a drop of vodka," and they got out with their arms round each other. The young man who drank scarcely said a word, but yet more and more companions joined him. He only listened to their chatter, grinning incessantly with a drivelling snigger, and only from time to time, always unexpectedly, brought out a sound something like "Ture-lure-loo!" while he put his finger up to his nose in a very comical way. This diverted the merchant, and the footman and all of them, and they burst into very loud and free and easy laughter. It is sometimes impossible to understand why people laugh. I joined them too, and, I don't know why, the young man attracted me too, perhaps by his very open disregard for the generally accepted conventions and proprieties. I didn't see, in fact, that he was simply a fool. Anyway, I got on to friendly terms with him at once, and, as I got out of the train, I learnt from him that he would be in the Tverskoy Boulevard between eight and nine. It appeared that he had been a student. I went to the Boulevard, and this was the diversion he taught me: we walked together up and down the boulevards, and a little later, as soon as we noticed a respectable woman walking along the street, if there were no one else near, we fastened upon her. Without uttering a word we walked one on each side of her, and with an air of perfect composure as though we didn't see her, began to carry on a most unseemly conversation. We called things by their names, preserving unruffled countenances as though it were the natural thing to do; we entered into such subtleties in our description of all sorts of filth and obscenity as the nastiest mind of the lewdest debauchee could hardly have conceived. (I had, of course, acquired all this knowledge at the boarding school before I went to the grammar school, though I knew only words, nothing of the reality.) The woman was dreadfully frightened, and made haste to try and get away, but we quickened our pace too—and went on in the same way. Our victim, of course, could do nothing; it was no use to cry out, there were no spectators; besides, it would be a strange thing to complain of. I repeated this diversion for eight days. I can't think how I

can have liked doing it ; though, indeed, I didn't like doing it—I simply did it. At first I thought it original, as something outside everyday conventions and conditions, besides I couldn't endure women. I once told the student that in his "Confessions" Jean Jacques Rousseau describes how, as a youth, he used to behave indecently in the presence of women. The student responded with his "ture-lure-loo !" I noticed that he was extraordinarily ignorant, and that his interests were astonishingly limited. There was no trace in him of any latent idea such as I had hoped to find in him. Instead of originality I found nothing in him but a wearisome monotony. I disliked him more and more. The end came quite unexpectedly. One night when it was quite dark, we persecuted a girl who was quickly and timidly walking along the boulevard. She was very young, perhaps sixteen or even less, very tidily and modestly dressed ; possibly a working girl hurrying home from work to an old widowed mother with other children ; there is no need to be sentimental though. The girl listened for some time, and hurried as fast as she could with her head bowed and her veil drawn over her face, frightened and trembling. But suddenly she stood still, threw back her veil, showing, as far as I remember, a thin but pretty face, and cried with flashing eyes :

" Oh, what scoundrels you are ! "

She may have been on the verge of tears, but something different happened. Lifting her thin little arm, she gave the student a slap in the face which could not have been more dexterously delivered. It did come with a smack ! He would have rushed at her, swearing, but I held him back, and the girl had time to run away. We began quarrelling at once. I told him all I had been saving up against him in those days. I told him he was the paltriest commonplace fool without the trace of an idea. He swore at me. . . . (I had once explained to him that I was illegitimate), then we spat at each other, and I've never seen him since. I felt frightfully vexed with myself that evening, but not so much the next day, and by the day after I had quite forgotten it. And though I sometimes thought of that girl again, it was only casually, for a moment. It was only after I had been a fortnight in Petersburg, I suddenly recalled the whole scene. I remembered it, and I was suddenly so ashamed that tears of shame literally ran down my cheeks. I was wretched the whole evening, and all that night, and I am rather miserable about it now. I could not understand at first

how I could have sunk to such a depth of degradation, and still less how I could have forgotten it without feeling shame or remorse. It is only now that I understand what was at the root of it; it was all due to my "idea." Briefly, I conclude that, having something fixed, permanent and overpowering in one's mind in which one is terribly absorbed, one is, as it were, removed by it from the whole world, and everything that happens, except the one great thing, slips by one. Even one's impressions are hardly formed correctly. And what matters most—one always has an excuse. However much I worried my mother at that time, however disgracefully I neglected my sister, "Oh, I've my 'idea,' nothing else matters," was what I said to myself, as it were. If I were slighted and hurt, I withdrew in my mortification and at once said to myself, "Ah, I'm humiliated, but still I have my idea, and they know nothing about that." The "idea" comforted me in disgrace and insignificance. But all the nasty things I did took refuge, as it were, under the "idea." It, so to speak, smoothed over everything, but it also put a mist before my eyes; and such a misty understanding of things and events may, of course, be a great hindrance to the "idea" itself, to say nothing of other things.

Now for another anecdote.

On the 1st of April last year, Marie Ivanovna was keeping her name-day; some visitors, though only a few, came for the evening. Suddenly Agrafena rushed in, out of breath, announcing that a baby was crying in the passage before the kitchen, and that she didn't know what to do. We were all excited at the news. We went out and saw a bark basket, and in the basket a three or four weeks old child, crying. I picked up the basket and took it into the kitchen. Then I immediately found a folded note: "Gracious benefactors, show kind charity to the girl christened Arina, and we will join with her to send our tears to the Heavenly throne for you for ever, and congratulate you on your name-day,

Persons unknown to you."

Then Nikolay Semyonovitch, for whom I have such a respect, greatly disappointed me. He drew a very long face and decided to send the child at once to the Foundling Home. I felt very sad. They lived very frugally but had no children, and Nikolay Semyonovitch was always glad of it. I carefully took little Arina out of the basket and held her up under the arms. The basket had that sour, pungent odour characteristic of a small

child which has not been washed for a long time. I opposed Nikolay Semyonovitch, and suddenly announced that I would keep the child at my expense. In spite of his gentleness he protested with some severity, and, though he ended by joking, he adhered to his intention in regard to the foundling. I got my way, however. In the same block of buildings, but in a different wing, there lived a very poor carpenter, an elderly man, given to drink, but his wife, a very healthy and still youngish peasant woman, had only just lost a baby, and, what is more, the only child she had had in eight years of marriage, also a girl, and by a strange piece of luck also called Arina. I call it good luck, because while we were arguing in the kitchen, the woman, hearing of what had happened, ran in to look at the child, and when she learned that it was called Arina, she was greatly touched. She still had milk, and unfastening her dress she put the baby to her breast. I began persuading her to take the child home with her, saying I would pay for it every month. She was afraid her husband would not allow it, but she took it for the night. Next morning, her husband consented to her keeping it for eight roubles a month, and I immediately paid him for the first month in advance. He at once spent the money on drink. Nikolay Semyonovitch, still with a strange smile, agreed to guarantee that the money should be paid regularly every month. I would have given my sixty roubles into Nikolay Semyonovitch's keeping as security, but he would not take it. He knew, however, that I had the money, and trusted me. Our momentary quarrel was smoothed over by this delicacy on his part. Marie Ivanovna said nothing, but wondered at my undertaking such a responsibility. I particularly appreciated their delicacy in refraining from the slightest jest at my expense, but, on the contrary, taking the matter with proper seriousness. I used to run over to the carpenter's wife three times a day, and at the end of a week I slipped an extra three roubles into her hand without her husband's knowledge. For another three I bought a little quilt and swaddling clothes. But ten days later little Arina fell ill. I called in a doctor at once, he wrote a prescription, and we were up all night, tormenting the mite with horrid medicine. Next day he declared that he had been sent for too late, and answered my entreaties—which I fancy were more like reproaches—by saying with majestic evasiveness: “I am not God.” The baby's little tongue and lips and whole mouth were covered with a minute white rash,

and towards evening she died, gazing at me with her big black eyes, as though she understood already. I don't know why I never thought to take a photograph of the dead baby. But will it be believed, that I cried that evening, and, in fact, I howled as I had never let myself do before, and Marie Ivanovna had to try to comfort me, again without the least mockery either on her part or on Nikolay Semyonovitch's. The carpenter made a little coffin, and Marie Ivanovna finished it with a frill and a pretty little pillow, while I bought flowers and strewed them on the baby. So they carried away my poor little blossom, whom it will hardly be believed I can't forget even now. A little afterwards, however, this sudden adventure made me reflect seriously. Little Arina had not cost me much, of course ; the coffin, the burial, the doctor, the flowers, and the payment to the carpenter's wife came altogether to thirty roubles. As I was going to Petersburg I made up this sum from the forty roubles sent me by Versilov for the journey, and from the sale of various articles before my departure, so that my capital remained intact. But I thought : " If I am going to be turned aside like this I shan't get far." The affair with the student showed that the " idea " might absorb me till it blurred my impressions and drew me away from the realities of life. The incident with little Arina proved, on the contrary, that no " idea " was strong enough to absorb me, at least so completely that I should not stop short in the face of an overwhelming fact and sacrifice to it at once all that I had done for the " idea " by years of labour. Both conclusions were nevertheless true.

CHAPTER VI

1

My hopes were not fully realized. I did not find them alone though Versilov was not at home, Tatyana Pavlovna was sitting with my mother, and she was, after all, not one of the family. Fully half of my magnanimous feelings disappeared instantly. It is wonderful how hasty and changeable I am in such cases ; a straw, a grain of sand is enough to dissipate my good mood and replace it by a bad one. My bad impressions, I regret to say, are not so quickly dispelled, though I am not resentful. . . When I went in, I had a feeling that my mother immediately

and hastily broke off what she was saying to Tatyana Pavlovna ; I fancied they were talking very eagerly. My sister turned from her work only for a moment to look at me and did not come out of her little alcove again. The flat consisted of three rooms. The room in which we usually sat, the middle room or drawing-room, was fairly large and almost presentable. In it were soft, red armchairs and a sofa, very much the worse for wear, however (Versilov could not endure covers on furniture) ; there were rugs of a sort and several tables, including some useless little ones. On the right was Versilov's room, cramped and narrow with one window ; it was furnished with a wretched-looking writing-table covered with unused books and crumpled papers, and an equally wretched-looking easy chair with a broken spring that stuck up in one corner and often made Versilov groan and swear. On an equally threadbare sofa in this room he used to sleep. He hated this study of his, and I believe he never did anything in it ; he preferred sitting idle for hours together in the drawing-room. On the left of the drawing-room there was another room of the same sort in which my mother and sister slept. The drawing-room was entered from the passage at the end of which was the kitchen, where the cook, Lukerya, lived, and when she cooked, she ruthlessly filled the whole flat with the smell of burnt fat. There were moments when Versilov cursed his life and fate aloud on account of the smell from the kitchen, and in that one matter I sympathized with him fully ; I hated that smell, too, though it did not penetrate to my room : I lived upstairs in an attic under the roof, to which I climbed by a very steep and shaky ladder. The only things worth mentioning in it were a semicircular window, a low-pitched ceiling, a sofa covered with American leather on which at night Lukerya spread sheets and put a pillow for me. The rest of the furniture consisted of two articles, a perfectly plain deal table and a wooden rush-bottomed chair. We still preserved, however, some relics of former comfort. In the drawing-room, for instance, we had a fairly decent china lamp, and on the wall hung a large and splendid engraving of the Sistine Madonna ; facing it on the other wall was an immense and expensive photograph of the cast-bronze gates of the cathedral of Florence. In the corner of the same room was a shrine of old-fashioned family ikons, one of which had a gilt-silver setting —the one they had meant to pawn, while another (the image of Our Lady) had a velvet setting embroidered in pearls. Under the ikons hung a little lamp which was lighted on every holiday.

Versilov evidently had no feeling for the ikons in their inner meaning and religious significance, but he restrained himself. He merely screwed up his eyes, sometimes complaining that the lamplight reflected in the gilt setting hurt them, but he did not hinder my mother from lighting the lamp.

I usually entered in gloomy silence, looking away into some corner, and sometimes without even greeting anyone. As a rule I returned earlier than to-day, and they used to send my dinner to me upstairs. Going into the room I said, "Good evening, mother," a thing I had never done before. Though even this time I was unable from a sort of bashfulness to make myself look at her, and I sat down in the opposite corner of the room. I was awfully tired, but I did not think of that.

"That lout of yours still walks in as rudely as ever," Tatyana Pavlovna hissed at me. She had been in the habit in old days of using abusive epithets to me and it had become an established tradition between us.

My mother faltered "Good evening" to me, using the formal mode of address, and evidently embarrassed at my greeting her. "Your dinner has been ready a long while," she added, almost overcome by confusion: "I hope the soup is not cold, I will order the cutlets at once. . . ." She was hastily jumping up to go to the kitchen and, for the first time perhaps during that whole month, I felt ashamed that she should run about to wait on me so humbly, though till that moment I had expected it of her.

"Thank you very much, mother, I have had dinner already. May I stay and rest here if I am not in the way?"

"Oh . . . of course. . . . how can you ask, pray sit down . . ."

"Don't worry yourself, mother, I won't be rude to Andrey Petrovitch again," I rapped out all at once.

"Good heavens! how noble of him," cried Tatyana Pavlovna. "Sonia darling, you don't mean to say you still stand on ceremony with him? Who is he to be treated with such deference, and by his own mother, too! Look at you, why you behave as though you were afraid of him, it is disgraceful."

"I should like it very much, mother, if you would call me Arkasha."

"Oh . . . yes . . . certainly, yes I will," my mother said hurriedly. "I . . . don't always . . . henceforward I will."

She blushed all over. Certainly her face had at times a great

charm. . . . It had a look of simplicity, but by no means of stupidity. It was rather pale and anaemic, her cheeks were very thin, even hollow; her forehead was already lined by many wrinkles, but there were none round her eyes, and her eyes were rather large and wide open, and shone with a gentle and serene light which had drawn me to her from the very first day. I liked her face, too, because it did not look particularly depressed or drawn; on the contrary, her expression would have been positively cheerful, if she had not been so often agitated, sometimes almost panic-stricken over trifles, starting up from her seat for nothing at all, or listening in alarm to anything new that was said, till she was sure that all was well and as before. What mattered to her was just that all should be as before; that there should be no change, that nothing new should happen, not even new happiness. . . . It might have been thought that she had been frightened as a child. Besides her eyes, I liked the oval of her rather long face, and I believe if it had been a shade less broad across the cheekbones she might have been called beautiful, not only in her youth but even now. She was not more than thirty-nine, but grey hairs were already visible in her chestnut hair.

Tatyana Pavlovna glanced at her in genuine indignation.

“A booby like him! And you tremble before him, you are ridiculous, Sofia, you make me angry, I tell you!”

“Ah, Tatyana Pavlovna, why should you attack him now? But you are joking perhaps, eh?” my mother added, detecting something like a smile on Tatyana Pavlovna’s face. Her scoldings could not indeed be always taken seriously. But she smiled (if she did smile) only at my mother, of course, because she loved her devotedly, and no doubt noticed how happy she was at that moment at my meekness.

“Of course, I can’t help feeling hurt, if you will attack people unprovoked, Tatyana Pavlovna, and just when I’ve come in saying ‘Good evening, mother,’ a thing I’ve never done before,” I thought it necessary to observe at last.

“Only fancy,” she boiled over at once: “He considers it as something to be proud of. Am I to go down on my knees to you, pray, because for once in your life you’ve been polite? and as though it were politeness! Why do you stare into the corner when you come in? I know how you tear and fling about before her! You might have said ‘Good evening’ to me, too, I wrapped you in your swaddling clothes, I am your godmother.”

I need not say I did not deign to answer. At that moment my sister came in and I made haste to turn to her.

"Liza, I saw Vassin to-day and he inquired after you. You have met him ?"

"Yes, last year in Luga," she answered quite simply, sitting down beside me and looking at me affectionately. I don't know why, but I had fancied she would flush when I spoke of Vassin. My sister was a blonde; very fair with flaxen hair, quite unlike both her parents. But her eyes and the oval of her face were like our mother's. Her nose was very straight, small, and regular; there were tiny freckles in her face, however, of which there was no sign in my mother's. There was very little resemblance to Versilov, nothing but the slenderness of figure, perhaps, her tallness and something charming in her carriage. There was not the slightest likeness between us—we were the opposite poles.

"I knew his honour for three months," Liza added.

"Is it Vassin you call 'his honour,' Liza ? You should call him by his name. Excuse my correcting you, sister, but it grieves me that they seem to have neglected your education."

"But it's shameful of you to remark upon it before your mother," cried Tatyana Pavlovna, firing up; "and you are talking nonsense, it has not been neglected at all."

"I am not saying anything about my mother," I said sharply, defending myself. "Do you know, mother, that when I look at Liza it's as though it were you over again; you have given her the same charm of goodness, which you must have had yourself, and you have it to this day and always will have it. . . . I was only talking of the surface polish, of the silly rules of etiquette, which are necessary, however. I am only indignant at the thought that when Versilov has heard you call Vassin 'his honour' he has not troubled to correct you at all—his disdain and his indifference to us are so complete. That's what makes me furious."

"He is a perfect bear himself, and he is giving us lessons in good manners ! Don't you dare talk of Versilov before your mother, sir, or before me either, I won't stand it !" Tatyana Pavlovna flashed out.

"I got my salary to-day, mother, fifty roubles; take it, please; here !"

I went up to her and gave her the money; she was in a tremor of anxiety at once.

"Oh, I don't know about taking it," she brought out, as though afraid to touch the money. I did not understand.

"For goodness' sake, mother, if you both think of me as one of the family, as a son and a brother. . . ."

"Oh, I've been to blame, Arkady : I ought to have confessed something to you, but I am afraid of you. . . ."

She said this with a timid and deprecating smile ; again I did not understand and interrupted.

"By the way, did you know, mother, that Andrey Petrovitch's case against the Sokolskys is being decided to-day ?"

"Ah ! I knew," she cried, clasping her hands before her (her favourite gesture) in alarm.

"To-day ?" cried Tatyana Pavlovna startled, "but it's impossible, he would have told us. Did he tell you ?" she turned to my mother.

"Oh ! no . . . that it was to-day . . . he didn't. But I have been fearing it all the week. I would have prayed for him to lose it even, only to have it over and off one's mind, and to have things as they used to be again."

"What ! hasn't he even told you, mother ?" I exclaimed. "What a man ! There's an example of the indifference and contempt I spoke of just now."

"It's being decided, how is it being decided ? And who told you ?" cried Tatyana Pavlovna, pouncing upon me. "Speak, do."

"Why, here he is himself ! Perhaps he will tell you," I announced, catching the sound of his step in the passage and hastily sitting down again beside Liza.

"Brother, for God's sake, spare mother, and be patient with Andrey Petrovitch . . ." she whispered to me.

"I will, I will," with that I turned to her and pressed her hand.

Liza looked at me very mistrustfully, and she was right.

2

He came in very much pleased with himself, so pleased that he did not feel it necessary to conceal his state of mind. And, indeed, he had become accustomed of late to displaying himself before us without the slightest ceremony, not only in his bad points but even where he was ridiculous, a thing which most people are afraid to do ; at the same time, he fully recognized

that we should understand to the smallest detail. In the course of the last year, so Tatyana Pavlovna observed, he had become slovenly in his dress : his clothes though old were always well cut and free from foppishness. It is true that he was prepared to put on clean linen only on every alternate day, instead of every day, which was a real distress to my mother ; it was regarded by them as a sacrifice, and the whole group of devoted women looked upon it as an act of heroism. He always wore soft wide-brimmed black hats. When he took off his hat his very thick but silvery locks stood up in a shock on his head ; I liked looking at his hair when he took off his hat.

“ Good evening ; still disputing ; and is he actually one of the party ? I heard his voice from outside in the passage ; he has been attacking me I suppose ? ”

It was one of the signs of his being in a good humour for him to be witty at my expense ; I did not answer, of course. Lukerya came in with a regular sackful of parcels and put them on the table.

“ Victory ! Tatyana Pavlovna ! the case is won, and the Sokolskys certainly won’t venture to appeal. I’ve won the day ! I was able to borrow a thousand roubles at once. Sonia, put down your work, don’t try your eyes. Back from work, Liza ? ”

“ Yes, father,” answered Liza, looking at him affectionately ; she used to call him father ; nothing would have induced me to submit to doing the same.

“ Tired ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Give up your work, don’t go to-morrow, and drop it altogether.”

“ Father, that will be worse for me.”

“ I beg you will . . . I greatly dislike to see women working, Tatyana Pavlovna.”

“ How can they get on without work ? a woman’s not to work ? ”

“ I know, I know ; that’s excellent and very true, and I agree with it beforehand, but—I mean needlework particularly. Only imagine, I believe that’s one of the morbid anomalous impressions of my childhood. In my dim memories of the time when I was five or six years old I remember more often than anything—with loathing, of course—a solemn council of wise women, stern and forbidding, sitting at a round table with scissors, material, patterns, and a fashion-plate. They thought

they knew all about it, and shook their heads slowly and majestically, measuring, calculating, and preparing to cut out. All those kind people who were so fond of me had suddenly become unapproachable, and if I began to play I was carried out of the room at once. Even my poor nurse, who held me by the hand and took no notice of my shouting and pulling at her, was listening and gazing enraptured, as though at a kind of paradise. The sternness of those sensible faces and the solemnity with which they faced the task of cutting out is for some reason distressing for me to picture even now. Tatyana Pavlovna, you are awfully fond of cutting out. Although it may be aristocratic, yet I do prefer a woman who does not work at all. Don't take that as meant for you, Sonia. . . . How could you, indeed ! Woman is an immense power without working. You know that, though, Sonia. What's your opinion, Arkady Makarovitch ? No doubt you disagree ? ”

“ No; not at all,” I answered—“ that's a particularly good saying that woman is an immense power, though I don't understand why you say that about work. And she can't help working if she has no money—as you know yourself.”

“ Well, that's enough,” and he turned to my mother, who positively beamed all over (when he addressed me she was all of a tremor); “ at least, to begin with, I beg you not to let me see you doing needlework for me. No doubt, Arkady, as a young man of the period you are something of a socialist ; well, would you believe it, my dear fellow, none are so fond of idleness as the toiling masses.”

“ Rest perhaps, not idleness.”

“ No, idleness, doing nothing ; that's their ideal ! I knew a man who was for ever at work, though he was not one of the common people, he was rather intellectual and capable of generalizing. Every day of his life, perhaps, he brooded with blissful emotion on visions of utter idleness, raising the ideal to infinity, so to speak, to unlimited independence, to everlasting freedom, dreaming, and idle contemplation. So it went on till he broke down altogether from overwork. There was no mending him, he died in a hospital. I am sometimes seriously disposed to believe that the delights of labour have been invented by the idle, from virtuous motives, of course. It is one of the 'Geneva ideas' of the end of last century. Tatyana Pavlovna, I cut an advertisement out of the newspaper the day before yesterday, here it is ”; he took a scrap of paper out of his waist-

coat pocket. "It is one of those everlasting students, proficient in classics and mathematics and prepared to travel, to sleep in a garret or anywhere. Here, listen: 'A teacher (lady) prepares for all the scholastic establishments (do you hear, for all) and gives lessons in arithmetic!' Prepares for all the scholastic establishments—in arithmetic, therefore, may we assume? No, arithmetic is something apart for her. It is a case of simple hunger, the last extremity of want. It is just the ineptitude of it that's so touching: it's evident that the lady has never prepared anyone for any school, and it is doubtful whether she is fit to teach anything. Yet at her last gasp she wastes her one remaining rouble and prints in the paper that she prepares for all the scholastic establishments, and what's more, gives lessons in arithmetic. *Per tutto mundo e in altri siti.*"

"Oh, Andrey Petrovitch, she ought to be helped! Where does she live?" cried Tatyana Pavlovna.

"Oh, there are lots of them!" He put the advertisement in his pocket. "That bag's full of treats for you, Liza, and you, Tatyana Pavlovna; Sonia and I don't care for sweet things. And perhaps for you, young man. I bought the things myself at Eliseyev's and at Ballé's. Too long we've gone hungry, as Lukerya said. (N.B.—None of us had ever gone hungry.) Here are grapes, sweets, *duchesses* and strawberry tarts; I've even brought some excellent liqueur; nuts, too. It's curious that to this day I'm fond of nuts as I have been from a child, Tatyana Pavlovna, and of the commonest nuts, do you know. Liza takes after me; she is fond of cracking nuts like a squirrel. But there's nothing more charming, Tatyana Pavlovna, than sometimes when recalling one's childhood to imagine oneself in a wood, in a copse, gathering nuts. . . . The days are almost autumnal, but bright; at times it's so fresh, one hides in the bushes, one wanders in the wood, there's a scent of leaves. . . . I seem to see something sympathetic in your face, Arkady Makarovitch?"

"The early years of my childhood, too, were spent in the country."

"But I thought you were brought up in Moscow, if I am not mistaken."

"He was living in Moscow at the Andronikovs' when you went there; but till then he used to live in the country with your aunt, Varvara Stepanovna," Tatyana Pavlovna put in.

"Sonia, here's some money, put it away. I promise you, in a few days, five thousand."

"So there's no hope then for the Sokolskys?" asked Tatyana Pavlovna.

"Absolutely none, Tatyana Pavlovna."

"I have always sympathized with you and all of yours, Andrey Petrovitch, and I have always been a friend of the family, but though the Sokolskys are strangers, yet, upon my word, I am sorry for them. Don't be angry, Andrey Petrovitch."

"I have no intention of going shares with them, Tatyana Pavlovna!"

"You know my idea, of course, Andrey Petrovitch; they would have settled the case out of court, if at the very beginning you had offered to go halves with them; now, of course, it is too late. Not that I venture to criticize. . . . I say so because I don't think the deceased would have left them out of his will altogether."

"Not only he wouldn't have left them out, he'd have certainly left them everything, and would have left none out but me, if he'd known how to do things and to write a will properly; but as it is, the law's on my side, and it's settled. I can't go shares, and I don't want to, Tatyana Pavlovna, and that is the end of the matter."

He spoke with real exasperation, a thing he rarely allowed himself to do. Tatyana Pavlovna subsided. My mother looked down mournfully. Versilov knew that she shared Tatyana Pavlovna's views.

"He has not forgotten that slap in the face at Ems," I thought to myself. The document given me by Kraft and at that moment in my pocket would have a poor chance if it had fallen into his hands. I suddenly felt that the whole responsibility was still weighing upon me, and this idea, together with all the rest, had, of course, an irritating effect upon me.

"Arkady, I should like you to be better dressed, my dear fellow; your suit is all right, but for future contingencies I might recommend you to an excellent Frenchman, most conscientious and possessed of taste."

"I beg you never to make such suggestions again," I burst out suddenly.

"What's that?"

"It is not that I consider it humiliating, of course, but we are not agreed about anything; on the contrary, our views are entirely

opposed, for in a day or two—to-morrow—I shall give up going to the prince's, as I find there is absolutely no work for me to do there."

"But you are going and sitting there with him—that is the work."

"Such ideas are degrading."

"I don't understand ; but if you are so squeamish, don't take money from him, but simply go. You will distress him horribly, he has already become attached to you, I assure you. . . . However, as you please. . . ." He was evidently put out.

"You say, don't ask for money, but thanks to you I did a mean thing to-day : you did not warn me, and I demanded my month's salary from him to-day."

"So you have seen to that already ; I confess I did not expect you to ask for it ; but how sharp you all are nowadays ! There are no young people in these days, Tatyana Pavlovna." He was very spiteful : I was awfully angry too.

"I ought to have had things out with you . . . you made me do it, I don't know now how it's to be."

"By the way, Sonia, give Arkady back his sixty roubles at once ; and you, my dear fellow, don't be angry at our repaying it so quickly. I can guess from your face that you have some enterprise in your mind and that you need it. . . . So invest it . . . or something of the sort."

"I don't know what my face expresses, but I did not expect mother would have told you of that money when I so particularly asked her. . . ." I looked at my mother with flashing eyes, I cannot express how wounded I felt.

"Arkasha, darling, for God's sake forgive me, I couldn't possibly help speaking of it. . . ."

"My dear fellow, don't make a grievance of her telling me your secrets : besides, she did it with the best intentions—it was simply a mother's longing to boast of her son's feeling for her. But I assure you I should have guessed without that you were a capitalist. All your secrets are written on your honest countenance. He has 'his idea,' Tatyana Pavlovna, as I told you."

"Let's drop my honest countenance," I burst out again. "I know that you often see right through things, but in some cases you see no further than your own nose, and I have marvelled at your powers of penetration. Well then, I have 'my idea.' That you should use that expression, of course, was an accident,

but I am not afraid to admit it ; I have 'an idea' of my own, I am not afraid and I am not ashamed of it."

"Don't be ashamed, that's the chief thing."

"And all the same I shall never tell it you."

"That's to say you won't condescend to ; no need to, my dear fellow, I know the nature of your idea as it is ; in any case it implies :

Into the wilderness I flee.

Tatyana Pavlovna, my notion is that he wants . . . to become a Rothschild, or something of the kind, and shut himself up in his grandeur. . . . No doubt he'll magnanimously allow us a pension, though perhaps he won't allow me one—but in any case he will vanish from our sight. Like the new moon he has risen, only to set again."

I shuddered in my inmost being ; of course, it was all chance ; he knew nothing of my idea and was not speaking about it, though he did mention Rothschild ; but how could he define my feelings so precisely, my impulse to break with them and go away ? He divined everything and wanted to defile beforehand with his cynicism the tragedy of fact. That he was horribly angry, of that there could be no doubt.

"Mother, forgive my hastiness, for I see that there's no hiding things from Andrey Petrovitch in any case," I said, affecting to laugh and trying if only for a moment to turn it into a joke.

"That's the very best thing you can do, my dear fellow, to laugh. It is difficult to realize how much every one gains by laughing even in appearance ; I am speaking most seriously. He always has an air, Tatyana Pavlovna, of having something so important on his mind, that he is quite abashed at the circumstance himself."

"I must ask you in earnest, Andrey Petrovitch, to be more careful what you say."

"You are right, my dear boy ; but one must speak out once for all, so as never to touch upon the matter again. You have come to us from Moscow, to begin making trouble at once. That's all we know as yet of your object in coming. I say nothing, of course, of your having come to surprise us in some way. And all this month you have been snorting and sneering at us. Yet you are obviously an intelligent person, and as such you might leave such snorting and sneering to those who have no other means of avenging themselves on others for their own

insignificance. You are always shutting yourself up, though your honest countenance and your rosy cheeks bear witness that you might look every one straight in the face with perfect innocence. He's a neurotic; I can't make out, Tatyana Pavlovna, why they are all neurotic nowadays. . . ? ”

“ If you did not even know where I was brought up, you are not likely to know why a man's neurotic.”

“ Oh, so that's the key to it! You are offended at my being capable of forgetting where you were brought up! ”

“ Not in the least. Don't attribute such silly ideas to me. Mother! Andrey Petrovitch praised me just now for laughing; let us laugh—why sit like this! Shall I tell you a little anecdote about myself? Especially as Andrey Petrovitch knows nothing of my adventures.”

I was boiling. I knew this was the last time we should be sitting together like this, that when I left that house I should never enter it again, and so on the eve of it all I could not restrain myself. He had challenged me to such a parting scene himself.

“ That will be delightful, of course, if it is really amusing,” he observed, looking at me searchingly. “ Your manners were rather neglected where you were brought up, my dear fellow, though they are pretty passable. He is charming to-day, Tatyana Pavlovna, and it's a good thing you have undone that bag at last.”

But Tatyana Pavlovna frowned; she did not even turn round at his words, but went on untying the parcels and laying out the good things on some plates which had been brought in. My mother, too, was sitting in complete bewilderment, though she had misgivings, of course, and realized that there would be trouble between us. My sister touched my elbow again.

3

“ I simply want to tell you all,” I began, with a very free-and-easy air, “ how a father met for the first time a dearly loved son: it happened 'wherever you were brought up' . . . ”

“ My dear fellow, won't it be . . . a dull story? You know, *tous les genres*. . . . ”

“ Don't frown, Andrey Petrovitch, I am not speaking at all with the object you imagine. All I want is to make every one laugh.”

“ Well, God hears you, my dear boy. I know that you love us

but I am not afraid to admit it ; I have 'an idea' of my own, I am not afraid and I am not ashamed of it."

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“ Well, God hears you, my dear boy. I know that you love us

all . . . and don't want to spoil our evening," he mumbled with a sort of affected carelessness.

" Of course, you have gusesed by my face that I love you ? "

" Yes, partly by your face, too."

" Just as I guessed from her face that Tatyana Pavlovna's in love with me. Don't look at me so ferociously, Tatyana Pavlovna, it is better to laugh ! it is better to laugh ! "

She turned quickly to me, and gave me a searching look which lasted half a minute.

" Mind now," she said, holding up her finger at me, but so earnestly that her words could not have referred to my stupid joke, but must have been meant as a warning in case I might be up to some mischief.

" Andrey Petrovitch, is it possible you don't remember how we met for the first time in our lives ? "

" Upon my word I've forgotten, my dear fellow, and I am really very sorry. All that I remember is that it was a long time ago . . . and took place somewhere. . . . "

" Mother, and don't you remember how you were in the country, where I was brought up, till I was six or seven I believe, or rather were you really there once, or is it simply a dream that I saw you there for the first time ? I have been wanting to ask you about it for a long time, but I've kept putting it off ; now the time has come."

" To be sure, Arkasha, to be sure I stayed with Varvara Stepanovna three times ; my first visit was when you were only a year old, I came a second time when you were nearly four, and afterwards again when you were six."

" Ah, you did then ; I have been wanting to ask you about it all this month."

My mother seemed overwhelmed by a rush of memories, and she asked me with feeling :

" Do you really mean, Arkasha, that you remembered me there ? "

" I don't know or remember anything, only something of your face remained in my heart for the rest of my life, and the fact, too, that you were my mother. I recall everything there as though it were a dream, I've even forgotten my nurse. I have a faint recollection of Varvara Stepanovna, simply that her face was tied up for toothache. I remember huge trees near the house —lime-trees I think they were—then sometimes the brilliant sunshine at the open windows, the little flower garden, the little

path, and you, mother, I remember clearly only at one moment when I was taken to the church there, and you held me up to receive the sacrament and to kiss the chalice ; it was in the summer, and a dove flew through the cupola, in at one window and out at another. . . .”

“ Mercy on us, that’s just how it was,” cried my mother, throwing up her hands, “ and the dear dove I remember, too, now. With the chalice just before you, you started, and cried out, ‘ a dove, a dove.’ ”

“ Your face or something of the expression remained in my memory so distinctly that I recognized you five years after in Moscow, though nobody there told me you were my mother. But when I met Andrey Petrovitch for the first time, I was brought from the Andronikovs’ ; I had been vegetating quietly and happily with them for five years on end. I remember their flat down to the smallest detail, and all those ladies who have all grown so much older here ; and the whole household, and how Andronikov himself used to bring the provisions, poultry, fish, and sucking-pigs from the town in a fish-basket. And how at dinner instead of his wife, who always gave herself such airs, he used to help the soup, and how we all laughed at his doing it, he most of all. The young ladies there used to teach me French. But what I liked best of all was Krylov’s Fables. I learned a number of them by heart and every day I used to recite one to Andronikov. . . .going straight into his tiny study to do so without considering whether he were busy or not. Well, it was through a fable of Krylov’s that I got to know you, Andrey Petrovitch. I see you are beginning to remember.”

“ I do recall something, my dear fellow, that you repeated something to me . . . a fable or a passage from ‘ Woe from Wit,’ I fancy. What a memory you have, though ! ”

“ A memory ! I should think so ! it’s the one thing I’ve remembered all my life.”

“ That’s all right, that’s all right, my dear fellow, you are quite waking me up.”

He actually smiled ; as soon as he smiled, my mother and sister smiled after him, confidence was restored ; but Tatyana Pavlovna, who had finished laying out the good things on the table and settled herself in a corner, still bent upon me a keen and disapproving eye. “ This is how it happened,” I went on : “ one fine morning there suddenly appeared the friend of my childhood, Tatyana Pavlovna, who always made her entrance on the stage

of my existence with dramatic suddenness. She took me away in a carriage to a grand house, to sumptuous apartments. You were staying at Madame Fanariotov's, Andrey Petrovitch, in her empty house, which she had bought from you ; she was abroad at that time. I always used to wear short jackets ; now all of a sudden I was put into a pretty little blue greatcoat, and a very fine shirt. Tatyana Pavlovna was busy with me all day and bought me lots of things ; I kept walking through all the empty rooms, looking at myself in all the looking-glasses. And wandering about in the same way the next morning, at ten o'clock, I walked quite by chance into your study. I had seen you already the evening before, as soon as I was brought into the house, but only for an instant on the stairs. You were coming downstairs to get into your carriage and drive off somewhere ; you were staying alone in Moscow then, for a short time after a very long absence, so that you had engagements in all directions and were scarcely ever at home. When you met Tatyana Pavlovna and me you only drawled 'Ah !' and did not even stop."

"He describes it with a special love," observed Versilov, addressing Tatyana Pavlovna ; she turned away and did not answer.

"I can see you now as you were then, handsome and flourishing. It is wonderful how much older and less good-looking you have grown in these years ; please forgive this candour, you were thirty-seven even then, though. I gazed at you with admiration ; what wonderful hair you had, almost jet black, with a brilliant lustre without a trace of grey ; moustaches and whiskers, like the setting of a jewel : I can find no other expression for it ; your face of an even pallor ; not like its sickly pallor to-day, but like your daughter, Anna Andreyevna, whom I had the honour of seeing this morning ; dark, glowing eyes, and gleaming teeth, especially when you laughed. And you did laugh, when you looked round as I came in ; I was not very discriminating at that time, and your smile rejoiced my heart. That morning you were wearing a dark blue velvet jacket, a sulphur coloured necktie, and a magnificent shirt with Alençon lace on it ; you were standing before the looking-glass with a manuscript in your hand, and were busy declaiming Tchatsky's monologue, and especially his last exclamation : 'A coach, I want a coach.'"

"Good heavens !" cried Versilov. "Why, he's right !

Though I was only in Moscow for so short a time, I undertook to play Tchatsky in an amateur performance at Alexandra Petrovna Vitovtov's in place of Zhileyko, who was ill ! ”

“ Do you mean to say you had forgotten it ? ” laughed Tatyana Pavlovna.

“ He has brought it back to my mind ! And I own that those few days in Moscow were perhaps the happiest in my life ! We were still so young then . . . and all so fervently expecting something. . . . It was then in Moscow I unexpectedly met so much. . . . But go on, my dear fellow : this time you've done well to remember it all so exactly. . . . ”

“ I stood still to look at you and suddenly cried out, ‘ Ah, how good, the real Tchatsky ’ You turned round at once and asked : ‘ Why, do you know Tchatsky already ? ’ and you sat down on a sofa, and began drinking your coffee in the most charming humour—I could have kissed you. Then I informed you that at the Andronikovs’ every one read a great deal, and that the young ladies knew a great deal of poetry by heart, and used to act scenes out of ‘ Woe from Wit ’ among themselves, and that all last week we had been reading aloud in the evening ‘ A Sportsman’s Sketches,’ but what I liked best of all was Krylov’s Fables, and that I knew them by heart. You told me to repeat one, and I repeated ‘ The Girl who was Hard to Please.’ ”

A maid her suitor shrewdly scanned.

“ Yes ! Yes ! I remember it all now,” cried Versilov again ; “ but, my dear fellow, I remember you, too, clearly now ; you were such a charming boy then, a thoughtful boy even, and, I assure you, you, too, have changed for the worse in the course of these nine years.”

At this point all of them, even Tatyana Pavlovna, laughed. It was evident that Andrey Petrovitch had deigned to jest, and had paid me out in the same coin for my biting remark about his having grown old. Every one was amused, and indeed, it was well said.

“ As I recited, you smiled, but before I was half-way through the fable you rang the bell and told the footman who answered it to ask Tatyana Pavlovna to come, and she ran in with such a delighted face, that though I had seen her the evening before I scarcely knew her. For Tatyana Pavlovna, I began the fable again, I finished it brilliantly, even Tatyana Pavlovna smiled,

and you, Andrey Petrovitch cried 'Bravo !' and observed with warmth that if it had been 'The Ant and the Grasshopper' it would not be wonderful that a sensible boy of my age should recite it sensibly, but this fable.

*A maid her suitor shrewdly scanned.
Indeed, that's not a crime.*

was different. "Listen how he brings out 'Indeed, that's not a crime,'" you said ; in fact, you were enthusiastic. Then you said something in French to Tatyana Pavlovna, and she instantly frowned and began to protest, and grew very hot, in fact ; but as it was impossible to oppose Andrey Petrovitch if he once took an idea into his head, she hurriedly carried me off to her room, there my hands and face were washed again, my shirt was changed, my hair was pomaded and even curled.

"Then towards evening Tatyana Pavlovna dressed herself up rather grandly as I had never expected to see her, and she took me with her in the carriage. It was the first time in my life I had been to a play ; it was at a private performance at Mme. Vitovtov's. The lights, the chandeliers, the ladies, the officers, the generals, the young ladies, the curtain, the rows of chairs, were utterly unlike anything I had seen before. Tatyana Pavlovna took a very modest seat in one of the back rows, and made me sit down beside her. There were, of course, other children like me in the room, but I had no eyes for anything, I simply waited with a sinking of my heart for the performance. When you came on, Andrey Petrovitch, I was ecstatic to the point of tears. What for and why, I don't understand. Why those tears of rapture ? It has been a strange recollection for me ever since, for these last nine years ! I followed the drama with a throbbing heart ; all I understood of it, of course, was that *she* was deceiving *him*, and that he was ridiculed by stupid people who were not worth his little finger. When he was reciting at the ball I understood that he was humiliated and insulted, that he was reproaching all these miserable people, but that he was—great, great ! No doubt my training at the Andronikovs' helped me to understand, and your acting, Andrey Petrovitch ! It was the first time I had seen a play ! When you went off shouting 'A coach, a coach !' (and you did that shout wonderfully) I jumped up from my seat, and while the whole audience burst into applause, I, too, clapped my hands and cried 'bravo' at the top of my voice. I vividly recall how at that instant I felt

as though I had been pierced by a pin in my back 'a little below the waist'; Tatyana Pavlovna had given me a ferocious pinch; but I took no notice of it. As soon as 'Woe from Wit' was over, Tatyana Pavlovna took me home, of course. 'You can't stay for the dancing, and it's only on your account I am not staying!' you hissed at me all the way home in the carriage, Tatyana Pavlovna. All night I was delirious, and by ten o'clock the next morning I was standing at the study door, but it was shut; there were people with you and you were engaged in some business with them; then you drove off and were away the whole day till late at night—so I did not see you again! What I meant to say to you, I have forgotten, of course, and indeed I did not know then, but I longed passionately to see you as soon as possible. And at eight o'clock next morning you were graciously pleased to set off for Serpuhov; at that time you had just sold your Tula estate to settle with your creditors, but there was still left in your hands a tempting stake; that was why you had come at that time to Moscow, where you had not been able to show yourself till then for fear of your creditors, and this Serpuhov ruffian was the only one of them who had not agreed to take half of what you owed him instead of the whole. When I questioned Tatyana Pavlovna, she did not even answer me. 'It's no business of yours, but the day after to-morrow I shall take you to your boarding school: get your exercise-books ready, take your lesson books, put them all in order, and you must learn to pack your little box yourself, you can't expect to be waited on, sir.' You were drumming this and that into my ears all those three days, Tatyana Pavlovna. It ended in my being taken in my innocence to school at Touchard's, adoring you, Andrey Petrovitch; our whole meeting was a trivial incident, perhaps, but would you believe it, six months afterwards I longed to run away from Touchard's to you!"

"You describe it capitally, you have brought it all back so vividly," Versilov pronounced incisively; "but what strikes me most in your story is the wealth of certain strange details, concerning my debts, for instance. Apart from the fact that these details are hardly a suitable subject for you to discuss, I can't imagine how you managed to get hold of them."

"Details? how I got hold of them? Why I repeat, for the last nine years I have been doing nothing but getting hold of facts about you."

"A strange confession, and a strange way of spending your time."

He turned half-reclining in his easy chair, and even yawned slightly, whether intentionally or not I could not say.

"Well, shall I go on telling you how I wanted to run to you from Touchard's?"

"Forbid him, Andrey Petrovitch; suppress him and send him away," Tatyana Pavlovna burst out.

"That won't do, Tatyana Pavlovna," Versilov answered her impressively. "Arkasha has evidently something on his mind, and so he must be allowed to finish. Well, let him speak! When he's said what he's got to say, it will be off his mind, and what matters most to him is that he should get it off his mind. Begin your new story, my dear fellow; I call it new, but you may rest assured that I know how it ends."

4

"I ran away, that is, I tried to run away to you, very simply. Tatyana Pavlovna, do you remember after I had been there a fortnight Touchard wrote you a letter—didn't he? Marie Ivanovna showed me the letter afterwards; that turned up among Andronikov's papers, too. Touchard suddenly discovered that the fees he had asked were too small, and with 'dignity' announced in his letter to you 'that little princes and senator's children were educated in his establishment, and that it was lowering its tone to keep a pupil of such humble origin as me unless the remuneration were increased.'

"*Mon cher*, you really might. . . ."

"Oh that's nothing, that's nothing," I interrupted, "I am only going to say a little about Touchard. You wrote from the provinces a fortnight later, Tatyana Pavlovna, and answered with a flat refusal. I remember how he walked into our class-room, flushing crimson. He was a very short thick-set little Frenchman of five-and-forty, a Parisian cobbler by origin, though he had from time immemorial held a position in Moscow as an instructor in the French language, and even had an official rank, of which he was extremely proud; he was a man of crass ignorance. There were only six of us pupils; among them there actually was a nephew of a Moscow senator; and we all lived like one family under the supervision of his wife, a very affected lady, who was the daughter of a Russian government clerk. During that fortnight I had given myself great airs

before my school-fellows. I boasted of my blue overcoat, and my papa, Andrey Petrovitch, and their questions : why I was called Dolgoruky and not Versilov did not embarrass me in the least, since I did not know why."

"Andrey Petrovitch !" cried Tatyana Pavlovna, in a voice almost menacing. My mother, on the contrary, was watching me intently, and evidently wished me to go on.

"*Ce Touchard* . . . I actually recall him now . . . he was a fussy little man," Versilov admitted ; " but he was recommended to me by the very best people. . . ."

"*Ce Touchard* walked in with the letter in his hand, went up to the big oak table, at which all six of us were seated learning something by heart ; he seized me firmly by the shoulder, picked me up from the chair, and ordered me to collect my exercise-books. 'Your place is not here but there,' he said, pointing to a tiny room on the left of the passage, where there was nothing but a plain deal table, a rush-bottom chair, and an American leather sofa—exactly like what I have upstairs in the attic. I went into it in amazement, very much downcast ; I had never been roughly treated before. Half an hour later when Touchard had gone out of the schoolroom, I began to exchange glances and smiles with my schoolfellows ; they, of course, were laughing at me ; but I had no suspicion of it and thought we were laughing because we were merry. At that moment Touchard darted in, seized me by the forelock, and dragged me about.

" 'Don't you dare sit with gentlemanly boys, you are a child of low origin and no better than a lackey.'

"And he gave me a stinging blow on my chubby, rosy cheek. He must have enjoyed doing so and he struck me a second time, and a third. I cried violently and was terribly astonished. For a whole hour I sat with my face hidden in my hands crying and crying. Something had happened which was utterly beyond my comprehension. I don't understand how a man, not of spiteful character, a foreigner like Touchard, who rejoiced at the emancipation of the Russian peasants, could have beaten a foolish child like me. I was only amazed, not resentful, however. I had not yet learnt to resent an insult. It seemed to me that I had somehow been naughty, that when I was good again I should be forgiven, and that we should all be merry again at once, that we should go out to play in the yard and live happy ever after."

"My dear fellow, if I had only known. . . ." Versilov drawled

with the careless smile of a rather weary man. "What a scoundrel that Touchard was, though! I have not given up all hope, however, that you may make an effort and forgive us for all that at last, and that we may all live happy ever after."

He yawned decisively.

"But I am not blaming you at all, and believe me, I am not complaining of Touchard," I cried, a little disconcerted. "Though, indeed, he beat me for ten months or so. I remember I was always trying to appease him in some way; I used to rush to kiss his hands, I was always kissing them, and I was always crying and crying. My schoolfellows laughed at me and despised me, because Touchard began to treat me sometimes like a servant, he used to order me to bring him his clothes when he was dressing. . My menial instincts were of use to me there; I did my very utmost to please him, and was not in the least offended, because I did not at that time understand it at all, and I am surprised to this day that I could have been so stupid as not to realize that I was not on an equal footing with the rest. It's true my schoolfellows made many things clear to me even then; it was a good school. Touchard came in the end to prefer giving me a kick to slapping me in the face, and six months later he even began to be affectionate; only he never failed to beat me once a month or so to remind me not to forget myself. He soon let me sit with the other boys, too, and allowed me to play with them, but not once during those two and a half years did Touchard forget the difference in our social positions, and from time to time, though not very frequently, he employed me in menial tasks, I verily believe, to remind me of it.

"I was running away; that's to say, I was on the point of running away for five months after those first two months. I have always been slow in taking action. When I got into bed and pulled the quilt over me, I began thinking of you at once, Andrey Petrovitch, only of you, of no one else; I don't in the least know why it was so. I dreamed about you too. I used always to be passionately imagining that you would walk in, and I would rush up to you and you would take me out of that place, and bring me home with you to the same study, and that we would go to the theatre again, and so on. Above all, that we should not part again—that was the chief thing! As soon as I had to wake up in the morning the jeers and contempt of the boys began again; one of them actually began beating me and making me put on his boots for him; he called me the vilest

names, particularly aiming at making my origin clear to me, to the diversion of all who heard him. When at last Touchard himself became comprehensible, something unbearable began in my soul. I felt that I should never be forgiven here. Oh, I was beginning by degrees to understand what it was they would not forgive me and of what I was guilty ! And so at last I resolved to run away. For two whole months I dreamed of it incessantly ; at last—it was September—I made up my mind. I waited for Saturday, when my schoolfellows used to go home for the week-end, and meanwhile I secretly and carefully got together a bundle of the most necessary things ; all the money I had was two roubles. I meant to wait till dusk ; ‘ then I will go downstairs,’ I thought, ‘ and I’ll go out and walk away ! ’ Where ? I knew that Andronikov had moved to Petersburg, and I resolved that I would look for Mme. Fanariotov’s house in Arbaty ; ‘ I’ll spend the night walking or sitting somewhere, and in the morning I’ll ask some one in the courtyard of the house, where Andrey Petrovitch is now, and if not in Moscow, in what town or country. They will be sure to tell me. I’ll walk away, and then ask some one, somewhere else, by which gate to go out to reach such a town ; and then I’ll go and walk and walk, I shall keep on walking ; I shall sleep somewhere under the bushes ; I shall eat nothing but bread, and for two roubles I can get bread enough for a long time.’

“ I could not manage to run away on Saturday, however ; I had to wait till next day, Sunday, and as luck would have it, Touchard and his wife were going away somewhere for the Sunday ; there was no one left in the house but Agafya and me. I awaited the night in terrible agitation, I remember. I sat at the window in the schoolroom, looking out at the dusty street, the little wooden houses, and the few passers-by. Touchard lived in an out-of-the-way street ; from the windows I could see one of the city gates ; ‘ Isn’t it the one ? ’ I kept wondering. The sun set in a red glow, the sky was so cold-looking, and a piercing wind was stirring up the dust, just as it is to-day. It was quite dark at last ; I stood before the ikon and began to pray, only very, very quickly, I was in haste ; I caught up my bundle, and went on tip-toe down the creaking stairs, horribly afraid that Agafya would hear me from the kitchen. The door was locked, I turned the key, and at once a dark, dark night loomed black before me like a boundless perilous unknown land, and the wind snatched off my cap. I was just going out on the same side of

the pavement ; I heard a hoarse volley of oaths from a drunken man in the street. I stood, looked, and slowly turned, slowly went upstairs, slowly took off my things, put down my little bundle and lay down flat, without tears, and without thoughts, and it was from that moment, Andrey Petrovitch, that I began to think. It was from that moment that I realized that besides being a lackey, I was a coward, too, and my real development began ! ”

“ Well, I see through you once and for all from this minute,” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, jumping up from her seat, and so suddenly, that I was utterly unprepared for it ; “ yes, you were not only a lackey then, you are a lackey now ; you’ve the soul of a lackey ! Why should not Andrey Petrovitch have apprenticed you to a shoemaker ? it would have been an act of charity to have taught you a trade ! Who would have expected more than that of him ? Your father, Makar Ivanovitch, asked—in fact, he insisted—that you, his children, should not be brought up to be above your station. Why, you think nothing of his having educated you for the university, and that through him you have received class rights. The little rascals teased him, to be sure, so he has sworn to avenge himself on humanity. . . . You scoundrel ! ”

I must confess I was struck dumb by this outburst, I got up and stood for some time staring and not knowing what to say.

“ Well, certainly Tatyana Pavlovna has told me something new,” I said at last, turning resolutely to Versilov ; “ yes, certainly I am such a lackey that I can’t be satisfied with Versilov’s not having apprenticed me to a shoemaker ; even ‘ rights ’ did not touch me. I wanted the whole of Versilov, I wanted a father . . . that’s what I asked for—like a regular lackey. Mother, I’ve had it on my conscience for eight years—when you came to Moscow alone to see me at Touchard’s, the way I received you then, but I have no time to speak of it now. Tatyana Pavlovna won’t let me tell my story, Good-bye till to-morrow, mother ; we may see each other again. Tatyana Pavlovna ! what if I am so utterly a lackey that I am quite unable to admit the possibility of a man’s marrying again when his wife is alive ? Yet you know that all but happened to Andrey Petrovitch at Ems ! Mother, if you don’t want to stay with a husband who may take another wife to-morrow, remember you have a son who promises to be a dutiful son to you for ever ; remember, and let us go away, only on condition that it is ‘ either he, or I ’ will

you ? I don't ask you for an answer at once, of course : I know that such questions can't be answered straight off."

But I could not go on, partly because I was excited and confused. My mother turned pale and her voice seemed to fail her : she could not utter a word. Tatyana Pavlovna said something in a very loud voice and at great length which I could not make out, and twice she pushed me on the shoulder with her fist. I only remember that she shouted that "my words were a sham, the broodings of a petty soul, counted over and turned inside out." Versilov sat motionless and very serious, he was not smiling. I went upstairs to my room. The last thing I saw as I went out was the reproach in my sister's eyes ; she shook her head at me sternly.

CHAPTER VII

1

I DESCRIBE all these scenes without sparing myself, in order to recall it clearly and revive the impression. As I went up to my attic, I did not know in the least whether I ought to be ashamed or triumphant as though I had done my duty. Had I been ever so little more experienced, I should have had a misgiving that the least doubt in such cases must be taken as a bad sign. but another fact threw me out in my reckoning : I don't know what I was pleased about, but I felt awfully pleased, in spite of my being uncertain, and of my realizing distinctly that I had not come off with flying colours downstairs. Even Tatyana Pavlovna's spiteful abuse of me struck me as funny and amusing and did not anger me at all. Probably all this was because I had anyway broken my chains and for the first time felt myself free.

I felt, too, that I had weakened my position : how I was to act in regard to the letter about the inheritance was more obscure than ever. Now it would be certainly taken for granted that I was revenging myself on Versilov. But while all this discussion was going on downstairs I had made up my mind to submit the question of the letter to an impartial outsider and to appeal to Vassin for his decision, or, failing Vassin, to take it to some one else. I had already made up my mind to whom. I would go to see Vassin once, for that occasion only, I thought to myself, and then —then I would vanish for a long while, for some months, from the

sight of all, especially of Vassin. Only my mother and sister I might see occasionally. It was all inconsistent and confused ; I felt that I had done something, though not in the right way, and I was satisfied : I repeat, I was awfully pleased anyway.

I meant to go to bed rather early, foreseeing I should have a lot to do next day. Besides finding a lodging and moving, I had another project which in one way or another I meant to carry out. But the evening was not destined to end without surprises, and Versilov succeeded in astonishing me extremely. He had certainly never been into my attic, and lo and behold, before I had been an hour in my room I heard his footsteps on the ladder : he called to me to show a light. I took a candle, and stretching out my hand, which he caught hold of, I helped him up.

“ *Merci*, my dear fellow ; I’ve never climbed up here before, not even when I took the lodgings. I imagined what sort of place it was, but I never supposed it was quite such a hole as this.” He stood in the middle of my attic, looking around with curiosity.

“ Why, this is a coffin, a regular coffin.”

It really had a resemblance to the inside of a coffin, and I positively admired the way he had described it in one word. It was a long narrow box of a room, the ceiling sloped away from the wall at the height of my shoulder, and the top of it was within easy reach of my hand. Versilov unconsciously stood stooping, afraid of hitting his head against the ceiling ; he did not knock it, however, and, finally more or less reassured, he seated himself on the sofa, where my bed had already been made up. But I did not sit down, I looked at him in the greatest amazement.

“ Your mother says she does not know whether to take the money you gave her this evening for your board for the month. But for a coffin like this, instead of taking your money, we ought rather to offer you compensation ! I have never been up and . . . I can’t conceive how you can exist here ! ”

“ I am used to it. But what I can’t get used to is seeing you in my room after what has just happened downstairs.”

“ O, yes, you were distinctly rude downstairs, but . . . I, too, have a special object which I will explain to you, though indeed there is nothing extraordinary in my coming ; even the scene downstairs is in the regular order of things ; but for mercy’s sake do explain this : what you told us downstairs after preparing us and approaching the subject so solemnly was surely not all you meant to disclose or communicate ? Was there really nothing else ? ”

“ That was all, or we’ll assume it was all.”

"It's not much, my dear fellow : I must own that from your beginning and the way you urged us to laugh, in fact from your eagerness to talk, I expected more."

"But that does not matter to you, surely ?"

"But I speak simply from a sense of proportion ; it was not worth making such a fuss about, it was quite disproportionate ; you've been sitting mute a whole month, preparing to speak, and when it comes—it's nothing."

"I meant to say more, but I am ashamed of having said even that. Not everything can be put into words, there are things it's better never to say at all ; I said a good deal, but you did not understand."

"Why, so you, too, are sometimes distressed at the impossibility of putting thought into words ! That's a noble sorrow, my dear fellow, and it's only vouchsafed to the elect : the fool is always satisfied with what he has said, and always, too, says more than he need ; they love to have something to spare."

"As I see I did, for instance ; I said more than I need : I asked for the 'whole of Versilov,' that was a great deal too much ; I don't need Versilov at all."

"My dear fellow, I see you want to retrieve your failure down-stairs. It is very evident you repent it, and as repentance among us always involves immediately attacking some one, you are very anxious to hit hard this time. I have come too soon, and you have not yet cooled down, and besides you are not very good at standing criticism. But sit down, for mercy's sake ; I have come to tell you something ; thank you, that's right. From what you said to your mother, as you went out, it's quite clear that it is better for us to separate. I have come to persuade you to do so as gently and with as little fuss as possible, to avoid grieving and alarming your mother any further. My coming up here even has cheered her. She believes in a way that we may still be reconciled and that everything will go on as before. I imagine that if we were to laugh heartily once or twice we should fill their timid hearts with delight. They may be simple souls, but they are sincere and true-hearted in their love. Why not humour them on occasion ? Well, that's one thing. Another thing : why should we necessarily part thirsting for revenge, gnashing our teeth, vowing vengeance, etc. Of course there is no manner of need to fall on each other's necks, but we might part, so to say, with mutual respect, mightn't we ?"

"That's all nonsense ! I promise to go away without a fuss—

and that's enough. And is it for my mother's sake you are anxious ? But it strikes me that my mother's peace of mind has absolutely nothing to do with it, and you are simply saying that."

" You don't believe it ? "

" You talk to me just as though I were a baby."

" I am ready to beg your pardon a thousand times over for that, in fact for everything you bring up against me, for those years of your childhood and the rest of it, but, *cher enfant*, what will be the use of it ? You are too clever to want to be put into such a stupid position. To say nothing of my not understanding, so far, the exact nature of your accusations. What is it you blame me for in reality ? For your not having been born a Versilov ? Bah ! You laugh contemptuously and wave your hands, so that's not it ? "

" No, I assure you. I assure you I don't think it an honour to be called Versilov."

" Let's leave honour out of the question ; and, besides, your answer was bound to be democratic ; but if so, what are you blaming me for ? "

" Tatyana Pavlovna told me just now all I needed to know, and had always failed to grasp, till she spoke. That is, that you did not apprentice me to a shoemaker, and that consequently I had to be grateful, too. I can't understand why it is I am not grateful, even now, even after I have been taught my lesson. Isn't it the pride of your race showing itself in me, Andrey Petrovitch ? "

" Probably not, and apart from that, you must admit that by your sallies downstairs you've only bullied and tormented your mother instead of crushing me, as you intended. Yet I should have thought it was not for you to judge her. Besides, what wrong has she done you ? Explain to me, too, by the way, my dear fellow : for what reason and with what object did you spread abroad that you were illegitimate, at your boarding school and at the grammar school, and everywhere you have been, to every casual stranger, as I hear you have ? I hear that you did this with a peculiar relish. And yet that's all nonsense, and a revolting calumny : you are legitimate, a Dolgoruky, the son of Makar Ivanovitch Dolgoruky, a respectable man, remarkable for his intelligence and character. That you have received a superior education is entirely owing to your former master, Versilov, and what's the upshot of it ? By proclaiming your illegitimacy, which is a calumny in itself, you first and foremost gave away your

mother's secret, and from a false pride exposed your mother to the criticism of every dirty stranger. My dear fellow, that was very discreditable, especially as your mother is in no way to blame : she has a nature of the greatest purity, and that her name is not Versilov is simply because her husband is still living."

"Enough, I entirely agree with you, and I have enough faith in your intelligence to hope that you won't go on rating at me too long for it. You are so fond of moderation ; and yet there's a moderation in all things, even in your sudden love for my mother. I'll tell you what would be better : since you have gone so far as to come up and see me and mean to spend a quarter of an hour or half an hour with me (I still don't know what for, we'll assume for my mother's peace of mind), and what's more, in spite of the scene downstairs, seem so eager to talk to me, you had better tell me about my father—tell me about Makar Ivanovitch the pilgrim. I want to hear from you about him : I have been intending to ask you for some time past. Now that we are parting perhaps for a long time, I should very much like to get from you an answer to another question : has it really been impossible for you during these twenty years to affect my mother's traditional ideas—and now my sister's, too—so as to dissipate by your civilizing influence the primitive darkness of her environment ? Oh, I am not speaking of the purity of her nature. She's infinitely nobler than you, morally anyway, excuse my saying so . . . but she's only an infinitely noble corpse. Versilov is the only one living, everything else about him and everything connected with him exists only on the express condition of having the honour to nourish him with its force, its living sap. But I suppose she, too, was once alive, wasn't she ? I suppose you loved something in her, didn't you ? I suppose she was once a woman ? "

"My dear fellow, she never was, if you will have it," he assured me, at once dropping into his habitual manner with me, with which I was so familiar, and by which I was so enraged, that is he was apparently all sincerity and open-heartedness, but if one looked more closely there was nothing in him but the deepest irony : "she never was. The Russian woman never is a woman."

"Is the Polish woman, the French woman ? Or the Italian, the passionate Italian, that's the sort to fascinate the civilized upper-class Russian of the type of Versilov ? "

"Well, I certainly did not expect to meet a Slavophil," laughed Versilov.

I remember his story, word for word : he began talking with great readiness indeed, and with evident pleasure. It was quite clear to me, that he had come up not to have a gossip with me, and not to pacify my mother either, but with some other object.

2

“ Your mother and I have spent these twenty years together in silence,” he began, prattling on (it was utterly affected and unnatural), “ and all that passed between us took place in silence. The chief characteristic of our twenty years’ connection has been its—dumbness. I believe we have never once quarrelled. It is true I have often gone away and left her alone, but it has always ended in my coming back. *Nous revenons toujours* ; indeed, it’s a fundamental characteristic of men ; it’s due to their magnanimity. If marriage depended on women alone, not a single marriage would last. Meekness, submissiveness, self-abasement, and at the same time firmness, strength, real strength, that’s your mother’s character. Take note, that she’s the best of all the women I’ve met in my life. And that she has strength I can bear witness : I have seen how that strength has supported her. When it’s a matter, I won’t say of convictions—convictions are out of the question—but what they look upon as convictions, and so, to their thinking, sacred, she is ready to face torture. Well, I leave you to judge, whether I am much like a torturer. That’s why I have preferred to remain silent about almost everything, and not simply because it was more convenient, and I confess I don’t regret it. In this way our life has gone on of itself on broad and humane lines, so that indeed I take no credit to myself for it. I must say by the way in parenthesis, that for some reason she never believed in my humanity, and so was always in a tremor ; but, though she has trembled, she has never given in to any advanced ideas. They are so good at that, while we never understand that sort of thing, and in fact they are much better at managing things for themselves than we are. They are able to go on living their own lives in positions most unnatural to them, and in positions most strange to them they remain always the same. But we can’t do that.”

“ Who are ‘they’ ? I don’t quite understand you.”

“ The people, my dear fellow, I’m speaking of the common people. They have shown their great living force, and their historical breadth both morally and politically. But, to come

back to ourselves, I may remark about your mother, that she is not always dumb ; your mother sometimes speaks, but she speaks in such a way that you see at once that you simply waste time in talking to her, even though you might have been preparing her for five years beforehand. Moreover, she makes the most unexpected objections. Note again, that I am far from calling her a fool ; on the contrary, she has intelligence of a sort, and even remarkable intelligence ; though perhaps you will not believe in her intelligence . . . ”

“ Why not ? What I don’t believe is that you really believe in her intelligence yourself, and are not pretending.”

“ Yes ? You look upon me as such a chameleon ? My dear fellow, I am allowing you a little too much licence . . . like a spoilt son . . . So be it for the time.”

“ Tell me if you can the truth about my father.”

“ About Makar Ivanovitch ? Makar Ivanovitch was, as you are aware, a house-serf, who, so to speak, had a yearning for glory of a sort . . . ”

“ I bet that at this minute you feel envious of him ! ”

“ On the contrary, my dear fellow, on the contrary, and if you like I am very glad to see you in such a flippant mood ; I swear that I am in a penitent frame of mind, and just now, at this moment, I regret a thousand times over all that happened twenty years ago. And besides, God knows, it all happened quite accidentally . . . well, and, so far as in me lay, humanely too ; —as I conceived of an act of humanity in those days anyway. Oh, in those days we were all boiling over with zeal for doing good, for serving the public weal, for a higher ideal ; we disapproved of class distinctions, of the privileges of our rank, of our property and even of usury, at least some of us did. . . . I declare we did. There were not many of us, but we said good things, and sometimes, I assure you, did good things, too.”

“ That was when you sobbed on his shoulder.”

“ I am ready to agree with you on every point beforehand. By the way, you heard of that shoulder from me, and so, at this moment, you are making spiteful use of my frankness and confidence in you ; but you must admit that there was not so much harm in that episode as might seem at the first glance, especially for that period. To be sure we were only making a beginning then. Of course it was a pose, but I did not know at the time that it was a pose. Have you, for instance, never posed in practical affairs ? ”

" I was rather sentimental downstairs, just now, and as I came up here I felt horribly ashamed at the thought that you might imagine I had been posing. It is true in some cases, though one's feelings are sincere, one makes a display of one's feelings. I swear that everything I said downstairs was absolutely genuine."

" That's exactly it ; you have very successfully defined it in a phrase, ' though one's feelings are sincere one makes a display of one's self ' ; but do you know it was just the same with me. Though I was making a display of them, my sobs were perfectly genuine. I don't deny that Makar Ivanovitch might, if he had been wittily disposed, have looked upon my sobs as the climax of mockery, but in those days he was too honest to be so clear-sighted. I don't know whether he felt sorry for me or not. I remember that I had a great desire that he should."

" Do you know," I interrupted him," you're jeering now when you say that ? And in fact, all this last month whenever you have talked to me, you have been jeering. Why have you done so, whenever you have talked with me ? "

" You think so ? " he answered mildly ; " you are very suspicious ; however, if I do laugh it's not at you, or, at least not only at you, don't be uneasy. But I am not laughing now, and then—in short I did everything I could then, and, believe me, not for my personal advantage. We, that is, superior people, unlike the common people, do not know how to act for our personal advantage : on the contrary, we made a mess of it as far as we possibly could, and I suspect that that was considered among us in those days ' our higher advantage,' in an exalted sense of course. The present generation of advanced people are much keener on the main chance than we were. Even before our ' sin ' I explained the whole position to Makar Ivanovitch with extraordinary directness. I am ready to admit now, that a great deal need not have been explained at all, especially with such directness ; to say nothing of humanity it would have been far more polite, but . . . but there's no pulling up when you once begin dancing, and want to cut a fine caper. And perhaps our cravings for the fine and exalted only amount to that in reality. All my life I have never been able to make up my mind about it. However, that is too deep a subject for our superficial conversation, but I assure you I am sometimes ready to die with shame, when I recall it. I offered him at the time three thousand roubles, and I remember he did not say a word and I did all the talking. Only fancy, I imagined that he was afraid of me, that

is of my rights of ownership over him, and I remember I did my utmost to reassure him ; I kept trying to persuade him to have no apprehension, but to tell me his wishes frankly and without sparing me. By way of guarantee I promised him, that if he did not accept my terms, that is three thousand with freedom (for himself and his wife, of course)—and a journey wherever he pleased (without his wife, of course)—then let him say so straight out, and I would at once give him his freedom, let his wife go, and compensate them both with the same three thousand, I believe, and they should not go away from me, but I would go away myself in solitude for three years to Italy. *Mon ami*, I should not have taken Mlle. Sapozhkov with me to Italy, you may be sure of that. I was extremely pure at that epoch. And, do you know, Makar Ivanovitch knew perfectly well that I should do as I promised ; but he still remained silent, and only when I was about to throw myself on his neck, for the third time, he drew back, waved his hand, and went out of the room with a certain lack of ceremony, indeed, which I assure you surprised me at the time. I caught a glimpse of myself in the looking-glass and I can't forget it.

“ As a rule when they don't speak it's worst of all, and he was a gloomy character, and I must confess that far from feeling sure of him I was awfully afraid of him, when I summoned him to my study. In that class there are types, and many of them, who are, so to speak, the very incarnation of all that's ill-bred, and one's more afraid of that than a beating. Sic. And what a risk I was running, what a risk ! Why, what if he had begun shouting for all the servants to hear, had howled, this village Uriah, what would have become of me, such a juvenile David, and what should I have done then ? That's why I trotted out the three thousand first of all, that was instinctive ; but luckily I was mistaken : this Makar Ivanovitch was something quite different.”

“ Tell me, had you 'sinned' then ? You said just now that you summoned the husband beforehand.”

“ Well, do you see . . . that is . . . as one understands it . . . ”

“ Oh, you had then. You said just now you were mistaken in him, that he was something different ; how different ? ”

“ Well, how exactly I don't know to this day, but somehow different, and, do you know, positively very decent. I think so because in the end I felt more than ever ashamed to face him. Next day he agreed to the journey, without any words, but without,

of course, forgetting one of the inducements I had offered him."

" He took the money ? "

" I should think so ! And you know, my dear fellow, in that point he surprised me too. I had not, of course, three thousand at the time in my pocket, but I procured seven hundred and handed it over to him as the first instalment ; and what do you think ? He demanded the remaining two thousand three hundred from me in the form of a credit note made payable to a certain merchant for security. And two years later, by means of that credit note, he got the money out of me before a court, and with interest too, so that he surprised me again, especially as he had literally gone collecting funds for building a church, and has been a pilgrim ever since, that is, for the last twenty years. I don't understand what a pilgrim should want money of his own for. . . . money which is such a worldly thing. . . . I offered the money at the minute of course with perfect sincerity, and, so to speak, in the first flush of feeling, but afterwards, after the lapse of so many minutes, I might naturally have thought better of it . . . and might have reckoned that he would spare me . . . or, so to say, spare *us*, me and her, and would have waited for a time at least. But he lost no time however . . . "

Here I must make a necessary note. If my mother were to outlive M. Versilov, she would have been left literally without a farthing in her old age, had it not been for Makar Ivanovitch's three thousand, which had been doubled long ago by the accumulation of interest, and which he had the previous year left her intact in his will. He had seen through Versilov even in those days.

" You told me once that Makar Ivanovitch had come several times on a visit to you, and always stayed at mother's lodgings ? "

" Yes, my dear boy : and I must confess at first I was awfully frightened of these visits. He has come six or seven times altogether during this period, that is, the last twenty years, and on the first occasions I used to hide myself if I were in the house when he arrived. At first I could not make out what it meant, and why he had turned up. But afterwards I thought that from certain points of view it was by no means so stupid on his part. Afterwards it somehow occurred to me to feel curious about him ; I came out to have a look at him, and formed, I assure you, a very

original impression of him. This was on his third or fourth visit, at the time when I had just been appointed a mediator, and when; of course, I was getting all my energies to work to study Russia. I heard from him a very great deal that was new to me. I found in him, besides, what I had never expected to find: a sort of benign serenity, an evenness of temper, and what was more surprising than anything, something almost like gaiety. Not the faintest allusion to *that* (*tu comprends*) and a very great capacity for talking sense, and talking extremely well, that is, with none of that silly servantish profundity, which I confess to you I can't endure, democratic as I am, and with none of those far-fetched Russian expressions which 'the genuine Russian peasant' makes use of in novels and on the stage. At the same time very little about religion, unless one begins upon the subject, and most charming descriptions of the monastery and monastic life, if one asks questions about it. And above all—respectfulness, that modest courtesy, just that courtesy which is essential for the truest equality, and without which, indeed, in my opinion, one cannot be really superior. The truest good-breeding is in such cases attained through the complete absence of conceit, and the man shows himself secure in his self-respect in his own station of life whatever that may be, and whatever fate may befall him. This power of respecting one's self in one's own position is extremely rare, as rare, anyway, as real personal dignity. . . . You will see that for yourself if you live long enough. But what struck me most of all, especially later on, and not at the beginning," added Versilov, "was the fact that this Makar had an extraordinary stateliness, and was, I assure you, very handsome. It is true he was old, but—

Dark visaged, tall, erect,

simple and dignified ; I actually wondered how my poor Sonia could have preferred me *then* ; at that time he was fifty, but he was still a fine fellow, and compared with him I was such a featherhead. I remember, however, that he was unpardonably grey even then ; so he must have been just as grey-headed when he married her. . . . Perhaps that had an influence."

Versilov had a very nasty aristocratic trick : after saying (when he could not help it) some particularly clever and fine things, he would all at once intentionally cap them with some stupid saying such as this remark about Makar Ivanovitch's grey hair, and the influence it had on my mother. He did this on purpose

probably without knowing why he did it, from a silly snobbish habit. To hear him, one would suppose he was speaking quite seriously, and all the while he was posing to himself, or laughing.

3

I don't know why but I was suddenly overcome by an intense exasperation. In fact, I recall with extreme dissatisfaction some of my behaviour during those minutes ; I suddenly got up from my seat.

"I tell you what," I said : "you say you came up chiefly that my mother might imagine we were reconciled. Time enough has passed for her to imagine it ; will you be so good as to leave me alone ? "

He flushed slightly and got up from his place.

"My dear boy, you are extremely unceremonious with me. However, good-bye ; there is no winning love by force. I will only venture upon one question : do you really want to leave the prince ? "

"Aha ! I knew you had some object in your mind."

"That is, you suspect I came up to induce you to stay with the prince, for some purpose of my own. But do you suppose, my dear fellow, that I sent for you from Moscow for some purpose of my own ? Oh ! how suspicious you are. On the contrary, I was anxious for your good in every way. And even now, since my position has so improved, I should have liked you to let me and your mother help you sometimes."

"I don't like you, Versilov."

"And 'Versilov' too ! By the way, I greatly regret that I can't transmit you the name, seeing that in reality constitutes my whole offence, if offence there is, doesn't it ? but again I couldn't marry a married woman, could I ? "

"That was why, I suppose, you wanted to marry an unmarried one ? "

A slight spasm passed over his face.

"You are thinking of Ems. Listen, Arkady, you went so far as to allude to that downstairs, pouring contempt upon me before your mother. You must know that that's where you make your greatest mistake. You know nothing whatever of what happened with Lidya Ahmakov. You don't know how much your mother had to do with it all, although she was not with me at the time, and if I have ever seen a good woman it was when

I looked at your mother then. But that's enough ; all that is a secret still, and you—you talk of what you don't know, and have heard about from outsiders."

" Only to-day the prince told me that you have a special fancy for unfledged girls."

" The prince said that ? "

" Yes, listen, would you like me to tell you exactly what you have come up to me for ? I have been sitting here all this time wondering what was the secret object of this visit, and now I believe I've guessed it."

He was just going out, but he stopped and turned to me in expectation.

" I blurted out just now that Touchard's letter to Tatyana Pavlovna was among Andronikov's papers, and at his death came into the hands of Marie Ivanovna. I saw how your face suddenly twitched, and I only guessed why just now, when your face twitched again in the same way. The idea suddenly occurred to you that if one letter in Andronikov's keeping had come into Marie Ivanovna's hands, why shouldn't another ? And Andronikov might have left very important letters, mightn't he ? "

" So I came up here hoping to make you talk about it ? "

" You know that yourself."

He turned very pale.

" You did not imagine that of yourself ; there's a woman's influence in it ; and what hatred there is in your words—in your coarse supposition ! "

" A woman ? I have seen that woman for the first time to-day ! Perhaps it's just to spy on her you want me to stay on with the old prince."

" I see, though, that you will do well in your new line. Isn't that perhaps ' your idea ' ? Go on, my dear fellow, you have an unmistakable gift for detective work. Given talent, one must perfect it."

He paused to take breath.

" Take care, Versilov, don't make me your enemy ! "

" My dear fellow, in such cases no one gives utterance to his last thoughts, but keeps them to himself. And with that, show me a light, if you please ; though you are my enemy you are not so much so as to want me to break my neck, I suppose. *Tiens, mon ami*, only fancy," he went on, as he descended the ladder, " all this month I have been taking you for a good-natured

fellow. You so want to live and are so thirsting for life that I do believe three lives would not be enough for you : one can see that in your face, and people like that are generally good-natured. And how mistaken I've been ! ”

4

I can't express how my heart ached when I was left alone ; it was as though I had cut off a piece of my own living flesh ! Why I had so suddenly lost my temper, and why I had so insulted him—so persistently and intentionally—I couldn't say now ; nor could I at the time, of course. And how pale he had turned ! And who knows, perhaps that paleness was the expression of the truest and purest feeling and the deepest sorrow, and not of anger or of offence. I always fancied that there had been a moment when he really loved me. Why, why could I not believe that now, especially when so much had been made clear ?

I had flown into a sudden fury and actually driven him away, partly perhaps by my sudden guess that he had come to find out whether there were not another letter left by Andronikov in Marie Ivanovna's possession. That he must have been on the look-out for those letters, and that he was on the look-out for them I knew. But who knows, perhaps at that minute I had made a horrible blunder ! And who knows, perhaps, by that blunder I had led him to think of Marie Ivanovna and the possibility of her having letters.

And finally, there was something else that was strange : again he had repeated word for word my own thought (about three lives), which I had expressed to Kraft that evening, and, what is more, in my very words. The coincidence was of course a chance again, but how he knew the inmost core of my nature ; what insight, what penetration ! But if he so well understood one thing, why was it he utterly failed to understand something else ? Was it possible he was not pretending, could he really be incapable of divining that it was not the noble rank of a Versilov I wanted, that it was not my birth I could not forgive him, but that all my life I had wanted Versilov himself, the whole man, the father, and that this idea had become part of myself. Was it possible that so subtle a man could be so crude and so stupid ? And if not, why did he drive me to fury, why did he pretend ?

CHAPTER VIII

1

I TRIED to get up as early as possible in the morning. As a rule we, that is my mother, my sister and I, used to get up about eight o'clock. Versilov used to lie comfortably in bed till half-past nine. Punctually at half-past eight my mother used to bring me up my coffee. But this time I slipped out of the house at eight o'clock without waiting for it. I had the day before mapped out roughly my plan of action for the whole of this day. In spite of my passionate resolve to carry out this plan I felt that there was a very great deal of it that was uncertain and indefinite in its most essential points. That was why I lay all night in a sort of half-waking state; I had an immense number of dreams, as though I were light-headed, and I hardly fell asleep properly all night. In spite of that I got up feeling fresher and more confident than usual. I was particularly anxious not to meet my mother. I could not have avoided speaking to her on a certain subject, and I was afraid of being distracted from the objects I was pursuing by some new and unexpected impression.

It was a cold morning and a damp, milky mist hovered over everything. I don't know why, but I always like the early workaday morning in Petersburg in spite of its squalid air; and the self-centred people, always absorbed in thought, and hurrying on their affairs, have a special attraction for me at eight o'clock in the morning. As I hasten on my road I particularly like either asking some one a practical question, or being asked one by some passer-by: both question and answer are always brief, clear, and to the point; they are spoken without stopping and almost always in a friendly manner, and there is a greater readiness to answer than at any other hour. In the middle of the day, or in the evening, the Petersburger is far more apt to be abusive or jeering. It is quite different early in the morning, before work has begun, at the soberest and most serious hour of the day. I have noticed that.

I set off again for the Petersburg Side. As I had to be back in Fontanka by twelve o'clock to see Vassin (who was always more likely to be at home at midday), I hurried on without stopping, though I had a great longing to have a cup of coffee. It was absolutely necessary to find Efim Zvyerev at home too;

I went to him and almost missed him ; he had finished his coffee and was just ready to go out.

“ What brings you here so often ? ” was how he greeted me without getting up from his seat.

“ I will explain that directly.”

The early morning everywhere, including Petersburg, has a sobering effect on a man’s nature. Some of the passionate dreams of night evaporate completely with the light and chill of morning, and it has happened to me myself sometimes to recall in the morning my dreams and even my actions of the previous night, with shame and self-reproach. But I will remark, however, in passing, I consider a Petersburg morning—which might be thought the most prosaic on the terrestrial globe—almost the most fantastic in the world. That is my personal view, or rather impression, but I am prepared to defend it. On such a Petersburg morning, foul, damp and foggy, the wild dream of some Herman out of Pushkin’s “ Queen of Spades ” (a colossal figure, an extraordinary and regular Petersburg type—the type of the Petersburg period !) would, I believe, be more like solid reality. A hundred times over, in such a fog, I have been haunted by a strange but persistent fancy : “ What if this fog should part and float away, would not all this rotten and slimy town go with it, rise up with the fog, and vanish like smoke, and the old Finnish marsh be left as before, and in the midst of it, perhaps, to complete the picture, a bronze horseman on a panting, overdriven steed.” In fact I cannot find words for my sensations, for all this is fantastic after all—poetic, and therefore nonsensical ; nevertheless I have often been and often am haunted by an utterly senseless question : “ Here they are all flitting to and fro, but how can one tell, perhaps all this is some one’s dream, and there is not one real person here, nor one real action. Some one who is dreaming all this will suddenly wake up—and everything will suddenly disappear.” But I am digressing.

I must say by way of preface that there are projects and dreams in every one’s experience so eccentric that they might well be taken at first sight for madness. It was with such a phantasy in my mind that I arrived that morning at Efim’s,—I went to Efim because I had no one else in Petersburg to whom I could apply on this occasion. Yet Efim was the last person to whom I should have gone with such a proposition if I had had any choice. When I was sitting opposite him, I was actually

struck myself with the thought that I was the incarnation of fever and delirium, sitting opposite the incarnation of prose and the golden mean. Yet on my side there was an idea and true feeling, while on his there was nothing but the practical conviction, that things were not done like that. In short I explained to him briefly and clearly that I had absolutely no one else in Petersburg whom I could send by way of a second in a matter vitally affecting my honour ; that he, Efim, was an old comrade, and therefore had no right to refuse, and that I wanted to challenge a lieutenant in the Guards, Prince Sokolsky, because more than a year ago he had given my father a slap in the face at Ems. I may mention by the way that Efim knew all the details of my family circumstances, my relations with Versilov, and almost all that I knew myself of Versilov's career ; I had on various occasions talked to him of my private affairs, except, of course, of certain secrets. He sat and listened as his habit was, all ruffling up his feathers like a sparrow in a cage, silent and serious, with his puffy face and his untidy, flaxen-white hair. A set smile of mockery never left his lips. This smile was all the nastier for being quite unintentional and unconscious ; it was evident that he genuinely and sincerely considered himself at that moment vastly superior to me in intellect and character. I suspected, too, that he despised me for the scene the evening before at Dergatchev's ; that was bound to be so. Efim was the crowd, Efim was the man in the street, and the man in the street has no reverence for anything but success.

“ And Versilov knows nothing of this ? ” he asked.

“ Of course not.”

“ Then what right have you to meddle in his affairs ? That's the first question. And the second one is, what do you want to show by it ? ”

I was prepared for the objection, and at once explained to him that it was not so stupid as he supposed. To begin with, the insolent prince would be shown that there are people, even in our class, who know what is meant by honour ; and secondly, Versilov would be put to shame and learn a lesson. And in the third place, what mattered most of all, even if Versilov had been right in refusing to challenge him in accordance with his convictions at the time, he would see that there was some one who was capable of feeling the insult to him so keenly that he accepted it as an insult to himself, and was prepared to lay down his life for his, Versilov's, interests . . . although he was leaving him for ever . . .

“Wait a minute, don’t shout, my aunt does not like it. Tell me, is it this same Prince Sokolsky that Versilov is at law with about a will? If so, this will be quite a new and original way of winning a lawsuit—to kill your opponent in a duel.”

I explained to him *en toutes lettres*, that he was simply silly and impertinent, and that if his sarcastic grin was growing broader and broader, it only showed his conceit and commonplaceness, and that he was incapable of imagining that I had had the lawsuit in my mind from the very beginning, and that reflection on that subject was not confined to his sagacity. Then I informed him that the case was already decided, and, moreover, it had not been brought by Prince Sokolsky but by the Princes Sokolsky, so that if a Prince Sokolsky were killed the others would be left, but that no doubt it would be necessary to put off the challenge till the end of the time within which an appeal was possible, not that the Solkoskys would as a fact appeal, but simply as a matter of good form. When the latest possible date for an appeal had passed, the challenge would follow; that I had come about it now, not that the duel would take place immediately, but that I must be prepared at any rate in time to find a second, if he, Efim, refused, as I knew no one. That was why, I said, I had come.

“Well, come and talk about it then, or else you’ll be leading us a wild-goose chase.”

He stood up and took his cap.

“So you’ll go then?”

“No, of course I won’t.”

“Why not?”

“Well, for one reason if I agreed now that I would go then, you would begin hanging about here every evening till the time for the appeal was over. And besides, it’s simply nonsense, and that’s all about it. And am I going to mess up my career for you? Why, Prince Sokolsky will ask me at once: ‘Who sent you?’—‘Dolgoruky’—‘And what’s Dolgoruky got to do with Versilov?’ And am I to explain your pedigree to him, pray? Why, he’d burst out laughing!”

“Then you give him a punch in the face!”

“But it’s all gibberish.”

“You’re afraid! You so tall and the strongest at the grammar school!”

“I’m afraid, of course, I am afraid. Besides, the prince won’t fight, for they only fight their equals.”

“I am a gentleman, too, by education. I have rights, I am his equal . . . on the contrary, he is not my equal.”

“You are a small boy.”

“How a small boy ? ”

“Just a small boy ; we are both boys but he is grown up.”

“You fool ! But I might have been married a year ago by the law.”

“Well, get married then, but anyway you are a —! you will grow up one day ! ”

I saw, of course, that he thought fit to jeer at me. I might not indeed have told all this foolish episode, and it would have been better in fact for it to have perished in obscurity ; besides, it’s revolting in its pettiness and gratuitousness, though it had rather serious consequences.

But to punish myself still further I will describe it fully. Realizing that Efim was jeering at me, I permitted myself to push him on the shoulder with my right hand, or rather my right fist. Then he took me by the shoulder, turned me upside down and—proved to me conclusively that he was the strongest of us at the grammar school.

2

The reader will doubtless imagine that I was in a terrible state of mind when I came out from Efim’s ; he will be mistaken, however. I quite realized that what had happened was only schoolboyishness, but the gravity of my purpose remained unchanged. I got some coffee at Vassilyevsky Island, purposely avoiding the restaurant I had been at the evening before on the Petersburg Side ; the restaurant and its nightingale were doubly hateful to me. It is a strange characteristic of mine that I am capable of hating places and things as though they were people. On the other hand I have happy places in Petersburg, that is places where I have at some time or other been happy. And I am careful of those places, and purposely avoid visiting them as far as possible, that later on when I am alone and unhappy I may go back to them to brood over my griefs and my memories. Over my coffee I did full justice to Efim and his common sense. Yes, he was more practical than I was, but I doubt whether he was in closer touch with reality. A realism that refuses to look beyond the end of its nose is more dangerous than the maddest romanticism, because it is blind. But while I did justice to Efim (who probably at that moment imagined that I was

wandering about the streets swearing)—I did not give up one point in my convictions, and I have not to this day. I have seen people who at the first bucket of cold water have abandoned their course of action, and even their idea, and begun laughing themselves at what an hour before they looked upon as sacred. Oh, how easily that is done ! Even if Efim were more right than I in the main, and I were foolish beyond all foolishness and giving myself airs, yet at the very bottom of it all there was a point of view upon which I was right : there was something to be said on my side also, and what is more, too, it was something they could never understand.

I reached Vassin's in Fontanka, near the Semyonovsky bridge, at twelve o'clock punctually, but I did not find him at home. His work was in Vassilyevsky Island, and he was only at home at certain fixed hours, almost always at midday. And as it was a holiday I made sure of finding him ; not finding him I decided to wait, although it was my first visit.

I reasoned that the matter of the letter was a question of conscience, and in choosing Vassin to decide it I was showing him the deepest respect, which no doubt must be flattering to him. Of course, I was really worried by this letter and was genuinely persuaded of the necessity of an outside opinion ; but I suspect that I could have got out of my difficulty without any outside help. And what is more I was aware of that myself ; I had only to give the letter to Versilov, to put it into his hands and then let him do what he liked with it—that would have settled it. To set myself up as judge, as arbitrator in a matter of this sort was indeed utterly irregular. By confining myself to handing over the letter, especially in silence, I should have scored at once, putting myself into a position of superiority over Versilov. For renouncing all the advantages of the inheritance as far as I was concerned (for some part of it would have been sure, sooner or later, to have fallen to me as Versilov's son), I should have secured for ever a superior moral attitude in regard to Versilov's future action. Nobody, on the other hand, could reproach me for ruining the Sokolskys, since the document had no decisive legal value. All this I thought over and made perfectly clear to myself, sitting in Vassin's empty room, and it even occurred to me suddenly that I had come to Vassin's, so thirsting for his advice how to act, simply to show him what a generous and irreproachable person I was, and so to avenge myself for my humiliation before him the previous evening.

As I recognized all this, I felt great vexation ; nevertheless I did not go away, but sat on, though I knew for certain that my vexation would only grow greater every five minutes.

First of all, I began to feel an intense dislike for Vassin's room. "Show me your room and I will tell you your character," one really may say that. Vassin had a furnished room in a flat belonging to people evidently poor, who let lodgings for their living and had other lodgers besides Vassin. I was familiar with poky apartments of this sort, scarcely furnished, yet with pretensions to comfort : there is invariably a soft sofa from the second-hand market, which is dangerous to move ; a washing-stand and an iron bed shut off by a screen. Vassin was evidently the best and the most to be depended on of the lodgers. Lodging-house keepers always have one such best lodger, and particularly try to please him. They sweep and tidy his room more carefully, and hang lithographs over his sofa ; under the table they lay an emaciated-looking rug. People who are fond of stuffy tidiness and, still more, of obsequious deference in their landladies are to be suspected. I felt convinced that Vassin himself was flattered by his position as best lodger. I don't know why, but the sight of those two tables piled up with books gradually enraged me. The books, the papers, the inkstand, all were arrayed with a revolting tidiness, the ideal of which would have coincided with the loftiest conceptions of a German landlady and her maidservant. There were a good many books, not merely magazines and reviews, but real books, and he evidently read them, and he probably sat down to read or to write with an extremely important and precise expression. I don't know why, but I prefer to see books lying about in disorder. Then, at any rate, work is not made into a sacred rite. No doubt Vassin was extremely polite to his visitors, but probably every gesture he made told them plainly, "I will spend an hour and a half with you, and afterward, when you go away, I'll set to work." No doubt one might have a very interesting conversation with him and hear something new from him, but he would be thinking, "Here we are talking now, and I am interesting you very much, but when you go away, I shall proceed to something more interesting. . ." Yet I did not go away, but went on sitting there. That I had absolutely no need of his advice I was by now thoroughly convinced.

I stayed for over an hour sitting on one of the two rush-bottom chairs which had been placed by the window. It

enraged me, too, that time was passing and that before evening I had to find a lodging. I was so bored that I felt inclined to take up a book, but I did not. At the very thought of distracting my mind I felt more disgusted than ever. For more than an hour there had been an extraordinary silence, when I began gradually and unconsciously to distinguish the sound of whispering, which kept growing louder, and came from somewhere close by, the other side of a door that was blocked up by the sofa. There were two voices, evidently women's, so much I could hear, but I could not distinguish the words. And yet I was so bored that I began to listen. It was obvious that they were talking earnestly and passionately, and that they were not talking about patterns. They were discussing or disputing about something, or one voice was persuading, or entreating, while the other was refusing or protesting. They must have been other lodgers. I soon got tired, and my ear became accustomed to the sound, so that though I went on listening, it was only mechanically, and sometimes quite without remembering that I was listening, when suddenly something extraordinary happened, as though some one had jumped down off a chair on to both feet, or had suddenly leapt up and stamped; then I heard a moan, then suddenly a shriek, or rather not a shriek but an infuriated animal squeal, reckless whether it could be overheard or not.

I rushed to the door and opened it; another door at the end of the corridor was opened simultaneously, the door of the landlady's room as I learned later, and from it two inquisitive faces peeped out. The shriek, however, ceased at once, and suddenly the door next to mine opened, and a young woman—so at least she seemed to me—dashed out, and rushed downstairs. The other woman, who was elderly, tried to stop her, but did not succeed, and could only moan after her:

"Olya, Olya, where are you going? Och!" But noticing our two open doors, she promptly closed hers, leaving a crack through which she listened till Olya's footsteps had died away completely on the stairs. I turned to my window. All was silence. It was a trivial and perhaps ridiculous incident, and I left off thinking of it.

About a quarter of an hour later I heard in the corridor at Vassin's door a loud and free-and-easy masculine voice. Some one took hold of the door-handle, and opened the door far enough for me to see in the passage a tall man who had already obviously

seen and indeed had carefully scrutinized me, although he had not yet entered the room, but still holding the door-handle went on talking to the landlady at the other end of the passage. The landlady called back to him in a thin, piping little voice which betrayed that he was an old acquaintance, respected and valued by her as a visitor of consequence, and a gentleman of a merry disposition. The merry gentleman shouted witticisms, but his theme was only the impossibility of finding Vassin at home. He declared that this was his destiny from his birth up, that he would wait again as before. And all this, no doubt, seemed the height of wit to the landlady. Finally the visitor flung the door wide open and came in.

He was a well-dressed gentleman, evidently turned out by a good tailor, as they say, "like a real gentleman," though there was nothing of "the real gentleman" about him, in spite, I fancy, of his desire to appear one. He was not exactly free and easy, but somehow naturally insolent, which is anyway less offensive than an insolence practised before the looking-glass. His brown, slightly grizzled hair, his black eyebrows, big beard and large eyes instead of helping to define his character, actually gave him something universal, like every one else. This sort of man laughs and is ready to laugh, but for some reason one is never cheerful in his company. He quickly passes from a jocular to a dignified air, from dignity to playfulness or winking, but all this seems somehow put on and causeless. . . . However, there is no need to describe him further. I came later on to know this gentleman more intimately, and therefore I have a more definite impression of him now than when he opened the door and came into the room. However, even now I should find it difficult to say anything exact or definite about him, because the chief characteristic of such people is just their incompleteness, their artificiality and their indefiniteness.

He had scarcely sat down when it dawned upon me that he must be Vassin's stepfather, one M. Stebelkov, of whom I had already heard something, but so casually that I couldn't tell what it was: I could only remember that it was not to his advantage. I knew that Vassin had long ago been left an orphan under this gentleman's control, but that for some years past he had not been under his influence, that their aims and interests were different, and that they lived entirely separated in all respects. It came back to my mind, too, that this Stebelkov had some money, that he was, indeed, something of

a speculator and spendthrift ; in fact I had probably heard something more definite about him, but I have forgotten. He looked me up and down, without bowing to me, however, put his top hat down on a table in front of the sofa, kicked away the table with an air of authority, and instead of quietly sitting down, flung himself full length on the sofa (on which I had not ventured to sit) so that it positively creaked, and dangling his legs held his right foot up in the air and began admiring the tip of his patent-leather boot. Of course he turned at once to me and stared at me with his big and rather fixed-looking eyes.

“ I don’t find him in,” he gave me a slight nod.

I did not speak.

“ Not punctual ! He has his own ideas From the Petersburg Side ? ” .

“ You mean you’ve come from the Petersburg Side ? ” I asked him in my turn.

“ No, I asked whether you had.”

“ I . . . yes, I have . . . but how did you know ? ”

“ How did I know ? H’m ! ” He winked, but did not deign to explain.

“ I don’t live on the Petersburg Side, but I’ve just been there and have come from there.”

He remained silent, still with the same significant smile, which I disliked extremely. There was something stupid in his winking.

“ From M. Dergatchev’s ? ” he said at last.

“ From Dergatchev’s ? ” I opened my eyes. He gazed at me triumphantly. “ I don’t know him.”

“ H’m ! ”

“ Well, as you please,” I answered. I began to loathe him.

“ H’m. . . . To be sure. No, excuse me : you buy a thing at a shop, at another shop next door another man buys something else, and what, do you suppose ? Money from a tradesman who is called a money-lender . . . for money too is an article of sale, and a money-lender is a tradesman too. . . . You follow me ? ”

“ Certainly I follow.”

“ A third purchaser comes along, and pointing to one shop, he says, ‘ This is sound.’ Then he points to the other shop and says, ‘ This is unsound.’ What am I to conclude about this purchaser ? ”

“ How can I tell.”

“ No, excuse me. I’ll take an example, man lives by good example. I walk along the Nevsky Prospect, and observe on the other side of the street a gentleman whose character I should like to investigate more closely. We walk, one each side of the street as far as the gate leading to Morskaya, and there, just where the English shop is, we observe a third gentleman, who has just been run over. Now mark: a fourth gentleman walks up, and wishes to investigate the character of all three of us, including the man who has been run over, from the point of view of practicability and soundness. . . . Do you follow ? ”

“ Excuse me, with great difficulty.”

“ Quite so ; just what I thought. I’ll change the subject. I was at the springs in Germany, the mineral springs, as I had frequently been before, no matter which springs. I go to drink the waters and see an Englishman. It is difficult as you know to make acquaintance with an Englishman ; two months later, having finished my cure, we were walking, a whole party of us, with alpenstocks on the mountain, no matter what mountain. At a pass there is an étape, the one where the monks make Chartreuse, note that. I meet a native standing in solitude looking about him in silence. I wish to form my conclusions in regard to his soundness : what do you think, can I apply for conclusions to the crowd of Englishmen with whom I am travelling solely because I was unable to talk to them at the springs ? ”

“ How can I tell ? Excuse me, it’s very difficult to follow you.”

“ Difficult, is it ? ”

“ Yes, you weary me..”

“ H’m.” He winked and made a gesture, probably intended to suggest victory and triumph ; then with stolid composure he took out of his pocket a newspaper which he had evidently only just bought, unfolded it and began reading the last page, apparently intending to leave me undisturbed. For five minutes he did not look at me.

“ Brestograevskies haven’t gone smash, eh ! Once they’ve started, they go on ! I know a lot that have gone smash.”

He looked at me with intense earnestness.

“ I don’t know much about the Stock Exchange so far,” I answered.

“ You disapprove of it.”

“ What ? ”

“ Money.”

“ I don’t disapprove of money but . . . but I think ideas come first and money second.”

“ That is, allow me to say. . . . Here you have a man, so to say, with his own capital. . . . ”

“ A lofty idea comes before money, and a society with money but without a lofty idea comes to grief.”

I don’t know why, but I began to grow hot. He looked at me rather blankly, as though he were perplexed, but suddenly his whole face relaxed in a gleeful and cunning smile.

“ Versilov, hey ? He’s fairly scored, he has ! Judgment given yesterday, eh ? ”

I suddenly perceived to my surprise that he knew who I was, and perhaps knew a great deal more. But I don’t understand why I flushed and stared in a most idiotic way without taking my eyes off him. He was evidently triumphant. He looked at me in high glee, as though he had found me out and caught me in the cleverest way.

“ No,” he said, raising both his eyebrows ; “ you ask me about M. Versilov. What did I say to you just now about soundness ? A year and a half ago over that baby he might have made a very perfect little job, but he came to grief.”

“ Over what baby ? ”

“ The baby who is being brought up now out of the way, but he won’t gain anything by it . . . because . . . ”

“ What baby ? What do you mean ? ”

“ His baby, of course, his own by Mlle. Lidya Ahmakov. . . . ‘ A charming girl very fond of me. . . . ’ phosphorus matches—eh ? ”

“ What nonsense, what a wild story ! He never had a baby by Mlle. Ahmakov ! ”

“ Go on ! I’ve been here and there, I’ve been a doctor and I’ve been an accoucheur. My name’s Stebelkov, haven’t you heard of me ? It’s true I haven’t practised for a long time, but practical advice on a practical matter I could give.”

“ You’re an accoucheur . . . did you attend Mlle. Ahmakov ? ”

“ No, I did not attend her. In a suburb there was a doctor Granz, burdened with a family ; he was paid half a thaler, such is the position of doctors out there, and no one knew him

either, so he was there instead of me. . . . I recommended him, indeed, because he was so obscure and unknown. You follow? I only gave practical advice when Versilov, Andrey Petrovitch, asked for it; but he asked me in dead secret, *tête-à-tête*. But Andrey Petrovitch wanted to catch two hares at once."

I listened in profound astonishment.

" 'Chase two hares, catch neither,' according to the popular, or rather peasant, proverb. What I say is: exceptions continually repeated become a general rule. He went after another hare, or, to speak plain Russian, after another lady, and with no results. Hold tight what you've got. When he ought to be hastening a thing on, he potters about: Versilov, that 'petticoat prophet,' as young Prince Sokolsky well described him before me at the time. Yes, you had better come to me! If there is anything you want to know about Versilov, you had better come to me!"

He was evidently delighted at my open-mouthed astonishment. I had never heard anything before about a baby. And at that moment the door of the next room slammed as some one walked rapidly in.

" Versilov lives in Mozhaisky Street, at Litvinov's house, No. 17; I have been to the address bureau myself!" a woman's voice cried aloud in an irritable tone; we could hear every word. Stebelkov raised his eyebrows and held up his finger. " We talk of him here, and there already he's. . . . Here you have exceptions continually occurring! *Quand on parle d'une corde. . . .*"

He jumped up quickly and sitting down on the sofa, began listening at the door in front of which the sofa stood. I too was tremendously struck. I reflected that the speaker was probably the same young girl who had run down the stairs in such excitement. But how did Versilov come to be mixed up in this too? Suddenly there came again the same shriek, the furious shriek of some one savage with anger, who has been prevented from getting or doing something. The only difference was that the cries and shrieks were more prolonged than before. There were sounds of a struggle, a torrent of words, " I won't, I won't," " Give it up, give it up at once!" or something of the sort, I don't remember exactly. Then, just as before, some one rushed to the door and opened it. Both the people in the room rushed out into the passage, one just as before, trying to restrain the other. Stebelkov, who had leapt up from the sofa, and been

listening with relish, fairly flew to the door, and with extreme lack of ceremony dashed into the passage straight upon the two. I too, of course, ran to the door. But his appearance in the passage acted like a pail of cold water. The two women vanished instantly, and shut the door with a slam.

Stebelkov was on the point of dashing after them, but he stopped short, held up his finger with a smile, and stood considering. This time I detected in his smile something nasty, evil and malignant. Seeing the landlady, who was again standing in her doorway, he ran quickly across the passage to her on tiptoe; after whispering to her for a minute or two, and no doubt receiving information, he came back to the room, resuming his air of ponderous dignity, picked up his top-hat from the table, looked at himself in the looking-glass as he passed, ruffled up his hair, and with self-complacent dignity went to the next door without even a glance in my direction. For an instant he held his ear to the door, listening, then winked triumphantly across the passage to the landlady, who shook her finger and wagged her head at him, as though to say, "Och, naughty man, naughty man!" Finally with an air of resolute, even of shrinking delicacy, he knocked with his knuckles at the door. A voice asked :

"Who's there?"

"Will you allow me to enter on urgent business?" Stebelkov pronounced in a loud and dignified voice.

There was a brief delay, yet they did open the door, first only a little way; but Stebelkov at once clutched the door-handle and would not let them close it again. A conversation followed, Stebelkov began talking loudly, still pushing his way into the room. I don't remember the words, but he was speaking about Versilov, saying that he could tell them, could explain everything—"Yes, I can tell you," "Yes, you come to me"—or something to that effect. They quickly let him in, I went back to the sofa and began to listen, but I could not catch it all, I could only hear that Versilov's name was frequently mentioned. From the intonations of his voice I guessed that Stebelkov by now had control of the conversation, that he no longer spoke insinuatingly but authoritatively, in the same style as he had talked to me—"you follow?" "kindly note that," and so on. With women, though, he must have been extraordinarily affable. Already I had twice heard his loud laugh, probably most inappropriate, because accompanying his voice, and sometimes

rising above it, could be heard the voices of the women, and they sounded anything but cheerful, and especially that of the young woman, the one who had shrieked : she talked a great deal, rapidly and nervously, making apparently some accusation or complaint, and seeking judgment or redress. But Stobelkov did not give way, he raised his voice higher and higher, and laughed more and more often ; such men are unable to listen to other people. I soon jumped up from the sofa, for it seemed to me shameful to be eavesdropping, and went back again to the rush-bottom chair by the window. I felt convinced that Vassin did not think much of this gentleman, but that, if anyone else had expressed the same opinion, he would have at once defended him with grave dignity, and have observed that, "he was a practical man, and one of those modern business people who were not to be judged from our theoretical and abstract standpoints." At that instant, however, I felt somehow morally shattered, my heart was throbbing and I was unmistakably expecting something.

About ten minutes passed ; suddenly in the midst of a resounding peal of laughter some one leapt up from a chair with just the same noise as before, then I heard shrieks from both the women. I heard Stobelkov jump up too and say something in quite a different tone of voice, as though he were justifying himself and begging them to listen. . . . But they did not listen to him ; I heard cries of anger : "Go away ! You're a scoundrel, you're a shameless villain !" In fact it was clear that he was being turned out of the room. I opened the door at the very minute when he skipped into the passage, as it seemed literally thrust out by their hands. Seeing me he cried out at once, pointing at me : "This is Versilov's son ! If you don't believe me, here is his son, his own son ! I assure you !" And he seized me by the arm as though I belonged to him. "This is his son, his own son !" he repeated, though he added nothing by way of explanation, as he led me to the ladies.

The young woman was standing in the passage, the elderly one a step behind her, in the doorway. I only remember that this poor girl was about twenty, and pretty, though thin and sickly looking ; she had red hair, and was somehow a little like my sister ; this likeness flashed upon me at the time, and remained in my memory ; but Liza never had been, and never could have been in the wrathful frenzy by which the girl standing before me was possessed : her lips were white, her light grey

eyes were flashing, she was trembling all over with indignation. I remember, too, that I was in an exceedingly foolish and undignified position, for, thanks to this insolent scoundrel, I was at a complete loss what to say.

"What do you mean, his son ! If he's with you he's a scoundrel too. If you are Versilov's son," she turned suddenly to me, "tell your father from me that he is a scoundrel, that he's a mean, shameless wretch, that I don't want his money. . . . There, there, there, give him this money at once !"

She hurriedly took out of her pocket several notes, but the elder lady (her mother, as it appeared later) clutched her hand :

"Olya, but you know . . . perhaps it's not true . . . perhaps it's not his son !"

Olya looked at her quickly, reflected, looked at me contemptuously and went back into the room ; but before she slammed the door she stood still in the doorway and shouted to Stebelkov once more :

"Go away !"

And she even stamped her foot at him. Then the door was slammed and locked. Stebelkov, still holding me by the shoulder, with his finger raised and his mouth relaxed in a slow doubtful grin, bent a look of inquiry on me.

"I consider the way you've behaved with me ridiculous and disgraceful," I muttered indignantly. But he did not hear what I said, though he was still staring at me.

"This ought to be looked into," he pronounced, pondering.

"But how dare you drag me in ? Who is this ? What is this woman ? You took me by the shoulder, and brought me in—what does it mean ?"

"Yes, by Jove ! A young person who has lost her fair fame . . . a frequently recurring exception—you follow ?" And he poked me in the chest with his finger.

"Ech, damnation !" I pushed away his finger. But he suddenly and quite unexpectedly went off into a low, noiseless, prolonged chuckle of merriment. Finally he put on his hat and, with a rapid change to an expression of gloom, he observed, frowning :

"The landlady must be informed . . . they must be turned out of the lodgings, to be sure, and without loss of time too, or they'll be . . . you will see ! Mark my words, you will see ! Yes, by Jove !" he was gleeful again all at once. "You'll wait for Grisha, I suppose ?"

"No, I shan't wait," I answered resolutely.

"Well, it's all one to me. . . ."

And without adding another syllable he turned, went out, and walked downstairs, without vouchsafing a glance in the landlady's direction, though she was evidently expecting news and explanations. I, too, took up my hat, and asking the landlady to tell Vassin that I, Dolgoruky, had called, I ran downstairs.

3

I had merely wasted my time. On coming out I set to work at once to look for lodgings; but I was preoccupied. I wandered about the streets for several hours, and, though I went into five or six flats with rooms to let, I am sure I passed by twenty without noticing them. To increase my vexation I found it far more difficult to get a lodging than I had imagined. Everywhere there were rooms like Vassin's, or a great deal worse, while the rent was enormous, that is, not what I had reckoned upon. I asked for nothing more than a "corner" where I could turn round, and I was informed contemptuously that if that was what I wanted, I must go where rooms were let "in corners." Moreover, I found everywhere numbers of strange lodgers, in whose proximity I could not have lived; in fact, I would have paid anything not to have to live in their proximity. There were queer gentlemen in their waistcoats without their coats, who had dishevelled beards, and were inquisitive and free-and-easy in their manners. In one tiny room there were about a dozen such sitting over cards and beer, and I was offered the next room. In another place I answered the landlady's inquiries so absurdly that they looked at me in surprise, and in one flat I actually began quarrelling with the people. However, I won't describe these dismal details; I only felt that I was awfully tired. I had something to eat in a cookshop when it was almost dark. I finally decided that I would go and give Versilov the letter concerning the will, with no one else present (making no explanation), that I would go upstairs, pack my things in my trunk and bag, and go for the night, if need be, to an hotel. At the end of the Obuhovsky Prospect, at the Gate of Triumph, I knew there was an inn where one could get a room to oneself for thirty kopecks; I resolved for one night to sacrifice that sum, rather than sleep at Versilov's. And as I

was passing the Institute of Technology, the notion suddenly struck me to call on Tatyana Pavlovna, who lived just opposite the institute. My pretext for going in was this same letter about the will, but my overwhelming impulse to go in was due to some other cause, which I cannot to this day explain. My mind was in a turmoil, brooding over "the baby," the "exceptions that pass into rules." I had a longing to tell some one, or to make a scene, or to fight, or even to have a cry—I can't tell which, but I went up to Tatyana Pavlovna's. I had only been there once before, with some message from my mother, soon after I came from Moscow, and I remember I went in, gave my message, and went out a minute later, without sitting down, and indeed she did not ask me to.

I rang the bell, and the cook at once opened the door to me, and shewed me into the room without speaking. All these details are necessary that the reader may understand how the mad adventure, which had so vast an influence on all that followed, was rendered possible. And to begin with, as regards the cook. She was an ill-tempered, snub-nosed Finnish woman, and I believe hated her mistress Tatyana Pavlovna, while the latter, on the contrary, could not bring herself to part with her from a peculiar sort of infatuation, such as old maids sometimes show for damp-nosed pug dogs, or somnolent cats. The Finnish woman was either spiteful and rude or, after a quarrel, would be silent for weeks together to punish her mistress. I must have chanced upon one of these dumb days, for even when I asked her, as I remember doing, whether her mistress were at home, she made no answer, but walked off to the kitchen in silence. Feeling sure after this that Tatyana Pavlovna was at home, I walked into the room, and finding no one there, waited expecting that she would come out of her bedroom before long; otherwise, why should the cook have shown me in? Without sitting down, I waited two minutes, three; it was dusk and Tatyana Pavlovna's dark flat seemed even less hospitable from the endless yards of cretonne hanging about. A couple of words about that horrid little flat, to explain the surroundings of what followed. With her obstinate and peremptory character, and the tastes she had formed from living in the country in the past, Tatyana Pavlovna could not put up with furnished lodgings, and had taken this parody of a flat simply in order to live apart and be her own mistress. The two rooms were exactly like two bird-cages, set side by side, one

smaller than the other ; the flat was on the third storey, and the windows looked into the courtyard. Coming into the flat, one stepped straight into a tiny passage, a yard and a half wide ; on the left, the two afore-mentioned bird-cages, and at the end of the passage the tiny kitchen. The five hundred cubic feet of air required to last a human being twelve hours were perhaps provided in this room, but hardly more. The rooms were hideously low-pitched, and, what was stupider than anything, the windows, the doors, the furniture, all were hung or draped with cretonne, good French cretonne, and decorated with festoons ; but this made the room twice as dark and more than ever like the inside of a travelling-coach. In the room where I was waiting it was possible to turn round, though it was cumbered up with furniture, and the furniture, by the way, was not at all bad : there were all sorts of little inlaid tables, with bronze fittings, boxes, an elegant and even sumptuous toilet table. But the next room, from which I expected her to come in, the bedroom, screened off by a thick curtain, consisted literally of a bedstead, as appeared afterwards. All these details are necessary to explain the foolishness of which I was guilty.

So I had no doubts and was waiting, when there came a ring at the bell. I heard the cook cross the little passage with lagging footsteps, and admit the visitors, still in silence, just as she had me. They were two ladies and both were talking loudly, but what was my amazement when from their voices I recognized one as Tatyana Pavlovna, and the other as the woman I was least prepared to meet now, above all in such circumstances ! I could not be mistaken : I had heard that powerful, mellow, ringing voice the day before, only for three minutes it is true, but it still resounded in my heart. Yes, it was "yesterday's woman." What was I to do ? I am not asking the reader this question, I am only picturing that moment to myself, and I am utterly unable to imagine even now how it came to pass that I suddenly rushed behind the curtain, and found myself in Tatyana Pavlovna's bedroom. In short, I hid myself, and had scarcely time to do so when they walked in. Why I hid and did not come forward to meet them, I don't know. It all happened accidentally and absolutely without premeditation.

After rushing into the bedroom and knocking against the bed, I noticed at once that there was a door leading from the bedroom into the kitchen, and so there was a way out of my

horrible position, and I could make my escape but—oh, horror ! the door was locked, and there was no key in it. I sank on the bed in despair ; I realized that I should overhear their talk, and from the first sentence, from the first sound of their conversation, I guessed that they were discussing delicate and private matters. Oh, of course, a straightforward and honourable man should even then have got up, come out, said aloud, “ I’m here, stop ! ” and, in spite of his ridiculous position, walked past them ; but I did not get up, and did not come out : I didn’t dare, I was in a most despicable funk.

“ My darling Katerina Nikolaevna, you distress me very much,” Tatyana Pavlovna was saying in an imploring voice. “ Set your mind at rest once for all, it’s not like you. You bring joy with you wherever you go, and now suddenly . . . I suppose you do still believe in me ? Why, you know how devoted I am to you. As much so as to Andrey Petrovitch, and I make no secret of my undying devotion to him. . . . But do believe me, I swear on my honour he has no such document in his possession, and perhaps no one else has either ; and he is not capable of anything so underhand, it’s wicked of you to suspect him. This hostility between you two is simply the work of your own imaginations. . . . ”

“ There is such a document, and he is capable of anything. And there, as soon as I go in yesterday, the first person I meet is *ce petit espion*, whom he has foisted on my father.”

“ Ach, *ce petit espion* ! To begin with he is not an *espion* at all, for it was I, I insisted on his going to the prince, or else he would have gone mad, or died of hunger in Moscow—that was the account they sent us of him ; and what’s more, that unmannerly urchin is a perfect little fool, how could he be a spy ? ”

“ Yes, he is a fool, but that does not prevent his being a scoundrel. If I hadn’t been so angry, I should have died of laughing yesterday : he turned pale, he ran about, made bows and talked French. And Marie Ivanovna talked of him in Moscow as a genius. That that unlucky letter is still in existence and is in dangerous hands somewhere, I gathered chiefly from Marie Ivanovna’s face.”

“ My beauty ! why you say yourself she has nothing ! ”

“ That’s just it, that she has ; she does nothing but tell lies, and she is a good hand at it, I can tell you ! Before I went to Moscow, I still had hopes that no papers of any sort were left, but then, then. . . . ”

"Oh, it's quite the contrary, my dear, I am told she is a good-natured and sensible creature; Andronikov thought more of her than of any of his other nieces. It's true I don't know her well—but you should have won her over, my beauty! It's no trouble to you to win hearts—why, I'm an old woman, but here I'm quite in love with you already, and can't resist kissing you. . . . But it would have been nothing to you to win her heart."

"I did, Tatyana Pavlovna, I tried; she was enchanted with me, but she's very sly too. . . . Yes, she's a regular type, and a peculiar Moscow type. . . . And would you believe it, she advised me to apply to a man here called Kraft, who had been Andronikov's assistant. 'Maybe he knows something,' she said. I had some idea of what Kraft was like, and in fact, I had a faint recollection of him; but as she talked about Kraft, I suddenly felt certain that it was not that she simply knew nothing but that she knew all about it and was lying."

"But why, why? Well, perhaps you might find out from him! That German, Kraft, isn't a chatterbox, and I remember him as very honest—you really ought to question him! Only I fancy he is not in Petersburg now. . . ."

"Oh, he came back yesterday evening, I have just been to see him. . . . I have come to you in such a state, I'm shaking all over. I wanted to ask you, Tatyana Pavlovna, my angel, for you know every one, wouldn't it be possible to find out from his papers, for he must have left papers, to whom they will come now? They may come into dangerous hands again! I wanted to ask your advice."

"But what papers are you talking about?" said Tatyana Pavlovna, not understanding. "Why, you say you have just been at Kraft's?"

"Yes, I have been, I have, I have just been there, but he's shot himself! Yesterday evening."

I jumped up from the bed. I was able to sit through being called a spy and an idiot, and the longer the conversation went on the more impossible it seemed to show myself. It was impossible to contemplate! I inwardly determined with a sinking heart to stay where I was till Tatyana Pavlovna went to the door with her visitor (if, that is, I were lucky, and she did not before then come to fetch something from the bedroom), and afterwards, when Mme. Ahmakov had gone out, then, if need be, I'd fight it out with Tatyana Pavlovna. . . . But when, now, suddenly hearing about Kraft, I jumped up from

the bed, I shuddered all over. Without thinking, without reflecting, or realizing what I was doing, I took a step, lifted the curtain, and appeared before the two of them. It was still light enough for them to see me, pale and trembling. . . . They both cried out, and indeed they well might.

“Kraft?” I muttered, turning to Mme. Ahmakov—“he has shot himself? Yesterday? At sunset?”

“Where were you? Where have you come from?” screamed Tatyana Pavlovna, and she literally clawed my shoulder. “You’ve been spying? You have been eavesdropping?”

“What did I tell you just now?” said Katerina Nikolaevna, getting up from the sofa and pointing at me.

I was beside myself.

“It’s a lie, it’s nonsense!” I broke in furiously. “You called me a spy just now, my God! You are not worth spying on, life’s not worth living in the same world with such people as you, in fact! A great-hearted man has killed himself, Kraft has shot himself—for the sake of an idea, for the sake of Hecuba. . . . But how should you know about Hecuba? . . . And here—one’s to live among your intrigues, to linger in the midst of your lying, your deceptions and underhand plots. . . . Enough!”

“Slap him in the face! Slap him in the face!” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, and as Katerina Nikolaevna did not move, though she stared fixedly at me (I remember it all minutely), Tatyana Pavlovna would certainly have done so herself without loss of time, so that I instinctively raised my hand to protect my face; and this gesture led her to imagine that I meant to strike her.

“Well, strike me, strike me, show me that you are a low cur from your birth up: you are stronger than women, why stand on ceremony with them!”

“That’s enough of your slander!” I cried. “I have never raised my hand against a woman! You are shameless, Tatyana Pavlovna, you’ve always treated me with contempt. Oh, servants must be treated without respect! You laugh, Katerina Nikolaevna, at my appearance I suppose; yes, God has not blessed me with the elegance of your young officers. And, yet I don’t feel humbled before you, on the contrary I feel exalted. . . . I don’t care how I express myself, only I’m not to blame! I got here by accident, Tatyana Pavlovna, it’s all the fault of your cook, or rather of your devotion to her: why did she bring me in here without answering my question? And after-

wards to dash out of a woman's bedroom seemed so monstrous, that I made up my mind not to show myself, but to sit and put up with your insults. . . . You are laughing again, Katerina Nikolaevna ! ”

“ Leave the room, leave the room, go away ! ” screamed Tatyana Pavlovna, almost pushing me out. “ Don't think anything of his abuse, Katerina Nikolaevna : I've told you that they sent us word that he was mad ! ”

“ Mad ? They sent word ? Who sent you word ? No matter, enough of this, Katerina Nikolaevna ! I swear to you by all that's sacred, this conversation and all that I've heard shall remain hidden. . . . Am I to blame for having learned your secrets ? Especially as I am leaving your father's service to-morrow, so as regards the letter you are looking for, you need not worry yourself ! ”

“ What's that. . . . What letter are you talking about ? ” asked Katerina Nikolaevna in such confusion that she turned pale, or perhaps I fancied it. I realized that I had said too much.

I walked quickly out ; they watched me go without a word, with looks of intense amazement. I had in fact set them a riddle.

CHAPTER IX

1

I HURRIED home and—marvellous to relate—I was very well satisfied with myself. That's not the way one talks to women, of course, and to such women too—it would be truer to say such a woman, for I was not considering Tatyana Pavlovna. Perhaps it's out of the question to say to a woman of that class that one spits on her intrigues, but I had said that, and it was just that that I was pleased with. Apart from anything else, I was convinced that by taking this tone I had effaced all that was ridiculous in my position. But I had not time to think much about that : my mind was full of Kraft. Not that the thought of him distressed me very greatly, but yet I was shaken to my inmost depths, and so much so that the ordinary human feeling of pleasure at another man's misfortune—at his breaking his leg or covering himself with disgrace, at his losing some one dear to him, and so on—even this ordinary feeling of mean

satisfaction was completely eclipsed by another absolutely single-hearted feeling, a feeling of sorrow, of compassion for Kraft—at least I don't know whether it was compassion, but it was a strong and warm-hearted feeling. And I was glad of this too. It's marvellous how many irrelevant ideas can flash through the mind at the very time when one is shattered by some tremendous piece of news, which one would have thought must overpower all other feelings and banish all extraneous thoughts, especially petty ones ; yet petty ones, on the contrary, obtrude themselves. I remember, too, that I was gradually overcome by a quite perceptible nervous shudder, which lasted several minutes, in fact all the time I was at home and talking to Versilov.

This interview followed under strange and exceptional circumstances.. I had mentioned already that we lived in a separate lodge in the courtyard ; this lodging was marked "No. 13." Before I had entered the gate I heard a woman's voice asking loudly, with impatience and irritation, "Where is No. 13 ?" The question was asked by a lady who was standing close to the gate and had opened the door of the little shop ; but apparently she got no answer there, or was even repulsed, for she came down the steps, resentful and angry.

"But where is the porter ?" she cried, stamping her foot. I had already recognized the voice.

"I am going to No. 13," I said, approaching her. "Whom do you want ?"

"I have been looking for the porter for the last hour. I keep asking every one ; I have been up all the staircases."

"It's in the yard. Don't you recognize me ?"

But by now she had recognized me.

"You want Versilov ; you want to see him about something, and so do I," I went on. "I have come to take leave of him for ever. Come along."

"You are his son ?"

"That means nothing. Granted, though, that I am his son, yet my name's Dolgoruky ; I am illegitimate. This gentleman has an endless supply of illegitimate children. When conscience and honour require it a son will leave his father's house. That's in the Bible. He has come into a fortune too, and I don't wish to share it, and I go to live by the work of my hands. A noble-hearted man will sacrifice life itself, if need be ; Kraft has shot himself, Kraft for the sake of an idea, imagine, a young man,

yet he overcame hope. . . . This way, this way ! We live in a lodge apart. But that's in the Bible ; children leave their parents and make homes for themselves. . . . If the idea draws one on . . . if there is an idea ! The idea is what matters, the idea is everything. . . ."

I babbled on like this while we were making our way to the lodge. The reader will, no doubt, observe that I don't spare myself much, though I give myself a good character on occasion ; I want to train myself to tell the truth. Versilov was at home. I went in without taking off my overcoat ; she did the same. Her clothes were dreadfully thin : over a wretched gown of some dark colour was hung a rag that did duty for a cloak or mantle ; on her head she wore an old and frayed sailor-hat, which was very unbecoming. When we went into the room my mother was sitting at her usual place at work, and my sister came out of her room to see who it was, and was standing in the doorway. Versilov, as usual, was doing nothing, and he got up to meet us. He looked at me intently with a stern and inquiring gaze.

"It's nothing to do with me," I hastened to explain, and I stood on one side. "I only met this person at the gate ; she was trying to find you and no one could direct her. I have come about my own business, which I shall be delighted to explain afterwards. . . ."

Versilov nevertheless still scrutinized me curiously.

"Excuse me," the girl began impatiently. Versilov turned towards her.

"I have been wondering a long while what induced you to leave money for me yesterday. . . . I . . . in short . . . here's your money !" she almost shrieked, as she had before, and flung a bundle of notes on the table. "I've had to hunt for you through the address bureau, or I should have brought it before. Listen, you !" She suddenly addressed my mother, who had turned quite pale. "I don't want to insult you ; you look honest, and perhaps this is actually your daughter. I don't know whether you are his wife, but let me tell you that this gentleman gets hold of the advertisements on which teachers and governesses have spent their last farthing and visits these luckless wretches with dishonourable motives, trying to lure them to ruin by money. I don't understand how I could have taken his money yesterday : he looked so honest. . . . Get away, don't say a word ! You are a villain, sir ! Even if you had

honourable intentions I don't want your charity. Not a word, not a word ! Oh, how glad I am that I have unmasked you now before your women ! Curse you ! ”

She ran to the door, but turned for one instant in the doorway to shout.

“ You've come into a fortune, I'm told.”

With that she vanished like a shadow. I repeat again, it was frenzy. Versilov was greatly astonished ; he stood as though pondering and reflecting on something. At last he turned suddenly to me :

“ You don't know her at all ? ”

“ I happened to see her this morning when she was raging in the passage at Vassin's ; she was screaming and cursing you. But I did not speak to her and I know nothing about it, and just now I met her at the gate. No doubt she is that teacher you spoke of yesterday, who also gives lessons in arithmetic.”

“ Yes, she is. For once in my life I did a good deed and . . . But what's the matter with you ? ”

“ Here is this letter,” I answered. “ I don't think explanation necessary : it comes from Kraft, and he got it from Andronikov. You will understand what's in it. I will add that no one but me in the whole world knows about that letter, for Kraft, who gave me that letter yesterday just as I was leaving him, has shot himself.”

While I was speaking with breathless haste he took the letter and, holding it lightly poised in his left hand, watched me attentively. When I told him of Kraft's suicide I looked at him with particular attention to see the effect. And what did I see ? The news did not make the slightest impression on him. If he had even raised an eyebrow ! On the contrary, seeing that I had paused, he drew out his eyeglasses, which he always had about him hanging on a black ribbon, carried the letter to the candle and, glancing at the signature, began carefully examining it. I can't express how mortified I was at this supercilious callousness. He must have known Kraft very well : it was, in any case, such an extraordinary piece of news ! Besides, I naturally desired it to produce an effect. Knowing that the letter was long, I turned, after waiting, and went out. My trunk had been packed long ago, I had only to stuff a few things into my bag. I thought of my mother and that I had not gone up to speak to her. Ten minutes later, when I had finished

my preparations and was meaning to go for a cab, my sister walked into my attic.

"Here are your sixty roubles ; mother sends it and begs you again to forgive her for having mentioned it to Andrey Petrovitch. And here's twenty roubles besides. You gave her fifty yesterday for your board ; mother says she can't take more than thirty from you because you haven't cost fifty, and she sends you twenty roubles back."

"Well, thanks, if she is telling the truth. Good-bye, sister, I'm going."

"Where are you going now ?"

"For the time being to an hotel, to escape spending the night in this house. Tell mother that I love her."

"She knows that. She knows that you love Andrey Petrovitch too. I wonder you are not ashamed of having brought that wretched girl here !"

"I swear I did not : I met her at the gate."

"No, it was your doing."

"I assure you . . ."

"Think a little, ask yourself, and you will see that you were the cause."

"I was only very pleased that Versilov should be put to shame. Imagine, he had a baby by Lidya Ahmakov . . . but what am I telling you !"

"He ? A baby ? But it is not his child ! From whom have you heard such a falsehood ?"

"Why, you can know nothing about it."

"Me know nothing about it ? But I used to nurse the baby in Luga. Listen, brother : I've seen for a long time past that you know nothing about anything, and meanwhile you wound Andrey Petrovitch—and . . . mother too."

"If he is right, then I shall be to blame. That's all, and I love you no less for it. What makes you flush like that, sister ? And more still now ! Well, never mind, anyway, I shall challenge that little prince for the slap he gave Versilov at Ems. If Versilov was in the right as regards Mlle. Ahmakov, so much the better."

"Brother, what are you thinking of ?"

"Luckily, the lawsuit's over now. . . . Well, now she has turned white !"

"But the prince won't fight you," said Liza, looking at me with a wan smile in spite of her alarm.